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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE RUINS OF ROME AS LITERARY TOPOS

BY

LAIRD D. TAYLOR ©

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
OF MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

EDMONTON, ALBERTA
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Lucretius

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INTRODUCTION

The sculptor and the scientist have in common the need for sharp, precise tools. In intellectual endeavours the terms which stand for and delimit concepts must be treated with care, for they are the instruments of thought; the idea is concretized by the word and thought systems are based upon word systems. When the word is debased, the thought is debased.[1] While it is natural in the development of language for the meanings of words to change, fuzzy words lead to fuzzy thoughts: in the study of literature it often becomes necessary to discard outworn terms or to redefine them, bringing renewed sharpness to expression and clarity to thought.

A term central to the study which follows is topos, underlined here to stress the original Greek meaning of place or locus around which the development of rhetoric is centred, and to differentiate present usage from that of those works which apply the word at random to common, recurring things with such abandon that both the word and the thought begin to suffer from entropy. As understood in much current literary theory and criticism, a topos is a neutral fragment of Stoff, the texture of a literary work. *Stoff* is defined as:

---

[1]. See also George Orwell, 1984 (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983) and Gaetan Picon, L'Écrivain et son ombre (Vienne, Poitiers: Éditions Gallimard, 1966) for discussions of the relationship between the word and thought.

> ...das Aeusserlichste, der Gegenstand vor dem Erlebnis durch den Dichter, festgelegt nach Raeumlichkeit, Zeitlichkeit und einmaligen Figuren. Sobald er aus bestimmter Haltung erlebt wird, hat er bereits eine erste Gestaltungsstufe erreicht, er ist Motiv geworden.[2]

The original meaning of *topos* is given as: "*Ort, Stelle einer Schrift, Hilfsmittel fuer Ausarbeitung einer Rede*"; in modern usage *topoi* are "*feste Denk-, Ausdrucks- und Anordnungsschemata*".[3] Clarity of concept is lost when, in the words of Curtius, the *topoi*:

> ...*werden Klischees, die literarisch allgemein verwendbar sind, sie breiten sich ueber alle Gebiete des literarisch erfassten und geformten Lebens aus.*[4]

The term "topos" can now be applied to anything which is commonplace, such as evening, apes, a blade of grass, the question as to whether one should marry, and common sayings like "everyone must die" or Omar Khayyam's "Eat, drink and be merry". Semantic devaluation follows, allowing the writer of a dissertation on Latin love poetry to declare of his use of "topos":

---

[2]. Horst Ruediger and Erwin Koppen, eds. *Kleines Literarisches Lexikon* (Bern und Muenchen: Francke Verlag, 1966), p. 392f.

[3]. Ibid., p. 415.

[4]. Ernst Robert Curtius, *Europaeische Literatur und Lateinisches Mittelalter*, 4th ed. (Bern und Muenchen: Francke Verlag, 1963, 1948), p. 79f.

> Um alzugrosse Eintoenigkeit im Ausdruck zu vermeiden, werden die Bezeichnungen "Topos" und "Motiv" nicht getrennt, sondern als Synonyme verwendet.[5]

When two words with identical meaning exist in any one language, one is fated for extinction. If "topos" and "motif" are interchangeable, then the former expression is not only superfluous, but also dangerous to the extent that it might create confusion on the part of those readers who assume that something different is meant. In this case the tool might better be abandoned. Yet regardless of the degree of overlap between the terms "topos" and "motif", the former should not and probably will not fade into oblivion; taking into consideration the increasing popularity of travel literature and the increasing attention being devoted to it by literary critics and literary historians, we would do well to look again at an old term which may not be as neutral as is supposed when it refers to a fundamental subject of poetry or poetic prose, a subject which occasions, in Dr. Johnson's phrase, "historical retrospection or incidental meditation"[6] within the realm of artistic creativity. Patterns may emerge which show that some topoi have relationships with some modes of thought and that the ideological prisms of different writers in different ages call forth treatment of those topoi from which the appropriate colour can most clearly be refracted. If the ruins of Rome and the ruins of Hellas are neutral in terms of Stoffgeschichte, then there should be no polarity between the two in European literature, which at times seems to pull toward one and at times toward the other in concert with the rising and falling literary fates of Vergil and Homer.

---

[5]. Gerald Koelblinger, Einige Topoi bei den lateinischen Liebesdichtern, Dissertation der Universitaet Graz, 1970 (Wien: Verlag Notring, 1971), p. 2.

[6]. Samuel Johnson, quoted in Alex Preminger, ed. Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1974, 1965), in the entry "Topographical poem", p. 858.

Notwithstanding the use here of the term topos in the simple, limited sense of a place, physical or imaginary, which serves as the locus around which a rhetorical and poetic discourse is constructed, there is no attempt to deny any other use of the term as it has developed in literary studies: the spirit of the argument is inclusive rather than exclusive, stating in effect that whatever else a "topos" may be, it may also be a place. The ruins of Rome have been commonplace in European literature since they first became ruins.

The aim of the present study is to provide an overview of the ruins of Rome as topos in poetic and other literary texts of both Eastern and Western Europe. The need for such a survey is demonstrated by the fact that the magistral work by Walther Rehm, Europaeische Romdichtung,[7] while treating in authoritative fashion the profound impact of the ruins of Rome on artistic creativity in Romance and Germanic languages, makes no mention of contributions to the discourse in Slavic languages, although Rehm's is the most complete study ever published; it is as if the eastern borders of Europe were formed by the frontiers of the German language. The only Slavic poet mentioned by Rehm is one who wrote in Latin verse and is therefore accessible to the Western European community of classical scholars.[8] As they are translated and commented upon, Slavic works dealing with the ruins of Rome are increasingly being recognized as having merit which transcends linguistic boundaries. There has nevertheless been no attempt to integrate the three bodies of thought which Romance, Germanic and Slavic languages bring to an area of literary creativity whose original vehicle of expression was Latin. It is believed to be peculiar to this thesis that it bridges the gap between Slavic and Western literary studies on the subject. Within the Slavic cultures it is Catholic Poland, not Orthodox Russia, which has more direct cultural and historical ties with Rome; this is reflected in the literature of the two languages.

---

[7] Walther Rehm, Europaeische Romdichtung, 2nd ed. (Muenchen: Max Hueber Verlag, 1960, 1937).

This study has its origins in a class on Renaissance and Baroque poetry, in which the reading of a poem by Joachim du Bellay, "Nouveau venu qui cherches Rome en Rome" evoked in the present author's imagination the strong presence of the poetic voice of the twentieth-century Russian poet, Osip Mandelstam. Further investigation uncovered a large body of Romdichtung which, while central to the Slavic poetic tradition, is not well known in the west. Much of the corpus is in Polish; in terms of volume the second largest contribution to a rich tradition is that of the Russian poetic community.

---

[8] . Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski's Latin verses are quoted by Rehm in Ibid., p. 149.

The balance which must be struck between survey and analysis will be arrived at taking into account the clarity of texts which to the educated reader are often self-explanatory, and the widespread belief that in most cases it is better to read one poem ten times or five related poems twice than it is to read ten pages of analysis of one poem. The minutae of exegesis will rarely be dwelt upon; an attempt will be made to view artistic works as vehicles for the transmission of ideas as well as for the expression of emotion. Where poetic translations of the works under study are not readily available, translations more literal than literary have been provided by the author. Often the thought of the poet first takes form in the act of creation of the literary work. With the obvious exception of one's Beatrice or Laura, no better object of contemplation can serve as the locus around which thoughts are born than the ruins of a city, the poetry of which consists in changing the physical place into its rhetorical equivalent, the topos.

If the reconstitution of a literary culture is a necessary prerequisite for the reading of learned poetry,[9] then it might be appropriate to use the tools of the times in an attempt to better understand the poetic moment, somewhat in the manner of those musicians who play classical music on original instruments. The Ratio studiorum of the Renaissance and Baroque periods, a time when the relics of ancient Rome were common poetic *topoi*, was a type of *Oratoris interpretatio* which first clarified the subject matter, then explored the rhetorical format, then cited passages similar either in matter or form.[10] In the study which follows the three points will be touched upon, albeit in somewhat different order so that the poetry retains primacy of place.

---

[9] Paul J. Smith, *Quevedo on Parnassus: Allusive Context and Literary Theory in the Love-Lyric* (London: The Modern Humanities Research Association, 1987), p. 15.

[10] Smith, p. 14, cites *Ratio atque institutio studiorum Societatis Jesu* (Rome, 1616), p. 117.

THE RUINS OF ROME AS LITERARY TOPOS

To begin a study of Rome in literature with the poems of Joachim du Bellay (1522-1560) is to start _in medias res_, for the _pléiadiste_ was neither the first nor the last to pursue an intellectual and philosophical argument through an emotional meditation upon the ruins of a city. E. Droz writes of du Bellay's _Le premier livre des antiquitez de Rome_:

> Dans cette méditation sentimentale sur la chute des empires et la force dévastrice du temps, du Bellay s'inspire de François Pétrarque qui, en 1336, s'était recueilli devant les restes de la ville éternelle.[11]

From Petrarch back to Ovid, from du Bellay forward in time to Mandelstam and Miłosz, a _leitmotif_ emerges of personal displacement, of homesickness, of exile. Yet the city remains as it is, as it was, in literature and in life, and the continuous flow of human and humanist consciousness uses the stones of the city as a locus of concentration.

Lest an attitude of melancholy prematurely overtake the matter under consideration, let Ovid enunciate the governing principle:

---

[11] E. Droz in Joachim du Bellay, _Les Antiquitez de Rome_, introd. E. Droz (Geneve: Librairie Droz, 1960), xii.

> Nothing retains its form; new shapes from old
> Nature, the great inventor, ceaselessly
> Contrives.In all creation, be assured,
> There is no death - no death, but only change
> And innovation; what we men call birth
> Is but a different new beginning; death
> Is but to cease to be the same. Perhaps
> This may have moved to that and that to this,
> Yet still the sum of things remains the same.
> Nothing can last, I do believe, for long
> In the same image. The ages of the world
> From Golden passed to Iron. How many times
> The fortunes of a place have been reversed![12]

The changing nature of Rome brings forth the question as to which ideal image of the city is contrasted with reality in du Bellay's poems: the Republic, the Empire, or the City of God and Ignatius of Loyola. Keating writes of du Bellay's initial impressions:

> Du Bellay was astounded to see cardinals and papal dignitaries flaunting their paramours, male and female, in public [...] In short, the principles of the New Testament appeared to him to have been completely forgotten, much less honored or practiced among the vicars of Christ on earth.[13]

The negative impact of Christian Rome on du Bellay finds expression in Les Regrets,[14] a collection of Alexandrine sonnets whose title refers back to Ovid's work from exile, the Tristia.[15] Du Bellay's poetic voice ironically implies that Ovid was exiled *from* Rome and the French poet *in* Rome.[16] The Eternal City in *Les Regrets* becomes both an environment and an occasion for the expression of personal sentiments similar to those voiced by Ovid from exile:

---

[12]. Ovid, Metamorphosis, trans. A. D. Melville (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), XV 248-262, p. 359.

[13]. L. Clark Keating, Joachim du Bellay (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1971), p. 61.

[14]. Joachim du Bellay, The Regrets, trans. C. H. Sisson (Manchester: Carcanet Press Limited, 1984.

[15]. Ovid, Tristia, trans. L. R. Lind (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1975.

> Plus me plaist le sejour qu'ont basty mes ayeux,
> Que des palais Romains le front audacieux:
> Plus que le marbre dur me plaist l'ardoise fine,
>
> Plus mon Loyre Gaulois que le Tybre Latin,
> Plus mon petit Lyré que le mont Palatin,
> Et plus que l'air marin la doulceur Angevine.[17]

This is the state of mind which informs du Bellay's later verses on the ruins of Rome. His visit seems at first to be a waste of time:

> O beaux discours humains! je suis venu si loing,
> Pour m'enrichir d'ennuy, de vieillesse, & de soing,
> Et perdre en voyageant le mielleur de mon aage.[18]

In Sonnet 78 of *Les Regrets* the poet finally tells the reader of which Rome he is speaking; it is the Rome of the Church:

> Je te raconteray du siege de l'eglise,
> Qui fait d'oysiveté son plus rich tresor,
> Et qui dessous l'orgueil de trois couronnes d'or
> Couve l'ambition, la haine, & la feintise...[19]

---

[16]. Keating, p. 73.

[17]. du Bellay, Sonnet 31 in *The Regrets*, p. 48.

[18]. Ibid., Sonnet 32, p. 48.

[19]. Ibid., Sonnet 78, p. 94.

The pride, vice, usury and false ambition of Sonnet 78 pass into historical perspective as du Bellay introduces the _topos_ of ruins; what will become the theme of the _Antiquitez_ is already visible in _Les Regrets_, Sonnet 80:

> Si je passe plus oultre, & de la Rome neufve
> Entre en la vieille Rome, adonques je ne treuve
> Que de vieux monuments un grand monceau pierreux.[20]

This last verse refers to a heap of stones, the French 'pierreux' a possible echo of the rock upon which the Church was built; nevertheless, the poetic voice is gradually leaving the Christian realm and entering a classical moralizing vein. An example is seen in Sonnet 82:

> Veuls-tu scavoir (Duthier) qu'elle chose c'est Rom?
> Rome est de tout le monde un publique eschafault,
> Une scene, un theatre, auquel rien ne default
> De ce qui peult tomber es actions de l'homme.[21]

Du Bellay's social criticism reaches a high point in Sonnet 83, which is directed against the city of the present and reflects a martial state of affairs:

> La paix & le bon temps ne regnent plus icy,
> La musique & le bal sont contraints de s'y taire,
> L'air y est corrumpu, Mars y est ordinaire,
> Ordinaire la faim, la peine, & le soucy.
> L'artisan desbauché y ferme sa boutique,
> L'ocieux advocat y laisse sa pratique,
> Et le pauvre marchand y port le bissac...[22]

---

[20]. Ibid., p. 96.

[21]. Ibid., p. 98.

[22]. Ibid., p. 100.

To observe and to criticize is part of the traditional role of the poet; the Renaissance man, however, has not only a critical eye but also a critical mind which strives to place human phenomena within a larger philosophical context. The ruins of Rome provide a convenient locus for meditation upon the nature of man, his society and his cosmos. The vision remains masculine and the city itself is feminized, as will be seen later.

Du Bellay must now attempt to reconcile his hitherto idealistic and classical vision of Ancient Rome with the catastrophic present. In this sense it is significant that Les Antiquitez de Rome appears after Les Regrets, although one must assume that the process of composition was contemporaneous. It is as if the poet was using poetic form to concretize and organize his thoughts. Keating states of Les Antiquitez:

> The over-all theme of this second sonnet sequence of Roman inspiration is, as its title implies, an exaltation of the great city of the past. With it, he contrasts the ruins that surround him at every turn, and betimes, the teeming, grubby city that stands on its site [...] and as he reflects [...] on the nobility of the ancient and the tawdriness of the modern, he reflects both realistically and sentimentally on the fate of Rome and on her fall.[23]

---

[23]. Keating, p. 89.

It might be illuminating at this point to make a close comparison between Sonnet 7 of Lez Antiquitez and the object of du Bellay's *imitatio*, the sonnet "Superbi colli" by Baldassare Castiglione (1478-1529), in order to show the extent to which du Bellay was working within an Italian tradition. Most of the sonnets of Les Antiquitez are inspired not by the ruins of Rome directly, but by the prose and poetry of others who had written in Latin and Italian. The two sonnets which follow provide the most direct example of a type of creative activity not only accepted but encouraged and praised during the Renaissance: that of close poetic translation. This was a way of showing respect to one's predecessors, whether Classical or Petrarchan, while at the same time enriching the tradition. Du Bellay's contribution was to help make French a literary language by availing himself of those models, whether Latin or Italian, which would shift the flame of culture from the old Rome to the new Rome; that is, to Paris. The two sonnets follow:

Du Bellay	Castiglione
Sacrez costaux, et vous sainctes ruines;	Superbi colli e voi, sacre ruine,
Qui le seul nom de Rom retenez,	Che'l nome sol di Rom anchor tenete;
Vieux monuments, qui encor soustenez	Ahi che reliquie miserande havete
L'honneur poudreux de tant d'ames divines:	Di tanti anime, eccelse e pellegrine!
Arcz triomphaux, pointes du ciel voisines	Theatri, archi, colossi, opre divine,
Qui de vous voir le ciel mesme estonnez,	Triomphal pompe gloriose e liete,
Las, peu à peu cendre vous devenez,	In poco cener pur converse sete
Fable du peuple et publiques rapines!	E fatte al vulgo vil favola al fine.
Et bien qu'au temps pour un temps facent guerre	Così se ben' un tempo al tempo guerra
Les bastimens, si est-ce que le temps	Fanno l'opre famose, a passo lento
Oeuvres et noms finalement atterre.	E l'opre e i nomi insieme il tempo atterra.
Tristes desirs, vivez donques contents:	Vivrò dunque fra miei martir contento,
Car si le temps finist chose si dure,	Chè se 'l tempo da fine a ciò ch' è in terra,
Il finira la peine que j'endure.[24]	Darà forsi anchor fine al mio tormento.[25]

---

[24] Joachim du Bellay, Les Regrets suivis des Antiquites de Rome (Paris: Éditions de Cluny, 1948), p. 251.

[25] Castiglione's sonnet is reproduced and commented upon in Richard Schwaderer, Das Verhaeltnis des Lyrikers Joachim du Bellay zu seinen Vorbildern, Ph.D. dissertation at the Julius Maximilians Universitaet zu Wuerzburg, 1968, in an elaboration of Vianay's work, "Les Antiquitez de Rome, leurs sources latines et italiennes", Annales de la faculte de lettres de Bordeaux, Bulletin Italien I (1901), pp. 187-199.

It is obvious at the outset that the Italian is more dense and more restrained; the French is an attempt not only to translate but to transcend. Rather than point out the commonalities, it might be more useful to see in what respects the two renderings of the same theme differ. The superb has become the sacred, for du Bellay's monuments "encore soustenez/L'honneur poudreux", whereas Castiglione's embody reliquie miserande in a more negative sense. Castiglione has catalogued architectural remains and referred to civic glory, but du Bellay makes more abstract and more poetic his image of obelisks. Both poems leave the elegaic mode in the last tercet, echoing Petrarchan lyricism while shifting theme[26] and directing attention to the poets' sorrows, but du Bellay is more confident that time will bring an end to his suffering, for he has omitted the Italian forsi, interpreted as "perhaps", and has therefore made a more positive statement.

The next sonnet of Les Antiquitez directs attention away from the poet and back to the topic at hand.

---

[26]. See also Schwaderer, p. 180.

Afin qu'ayant rangé tout pouvoir sous la main,
Rien ne peust estre borne à l'empire romain,
Et que si bien le temps destruit les republiques,

Le temps ne mist si bas la romaine hauteur,
Que le chef deterré aux fondements antiques,
Qui prindrent nom de luy, fust decouvert menteur.[27]

There may be a rhetorical twist in the final tercet: *Le chef deterré*, in remarks attributed to M. Saulnier, is a head of sculpture discovered during excavations for the foundations of the original Rome, a head which lent its name to the etymology of the word "capital" and was regarded by the founders of Rome "as an augury of the city's future greatness".[28] If this is so, then an otherwise "pedestrian"[29] sonnet takes on wider meaning, for *le chef deterré* may also be interpreted as referring to the pontiff or the pontificate, whose concern is *de-terré*; unworldly, other-worldly, or removed from this world. Rome is the head of the church only because Rome was the centre of empire, and it is through the apparatus of the Roman Empire that the Roman Church established its dominion. That *le chef* could not be *decouvert menteur* is faint praise, and may simply mean that the poet dare not voice his criticism.

---

[27] Du Bellay, *Les Antiquitez*, p. 7.

[28] Keating, p. 91.

[29] Ibid., p. 90.

If in Sonnet 3, "Nouveau venu qui cherches Rome en Rome" du Bellay has resigned himself philosophically to a Rome which no longer exists, then a deeper understanding of the contrast he perceived between past and present would necessitate a more exact picture of the knowledge available to his contemporaries concerning the Rome which once stood proud in glory, and the manner of its demise. What information had survived from antiquity, through the Middle Ages to the Renaissance about the marvels of Rome and the reasons for their destruction?

Around the year 1143 A.D. a canon of St. Peter's, "Benedict", wrote a guide for travellers and pilgrims entitled Mirabilia Urbis Romae, The Marvels of Rome.[30] His description of what we now call the ruins of Rome shows us not only what we have lost, but also how greatly common knowledge of the Western European heritage has deteriorated. The author writes of the most visible landmark:

> The Colosseum was the temple of the sun. It was of marvellous beauty and greatness, disposed with many different vaulted chambers and all covered with a heaven of gilded brass, where thunder and lightning and glittering fire were made, and where rain was shed through slender tubes. Besides this there were the supercelestial signs and the planets Sol and Luna, which were drawn along in their proper chariots. And in the middle dwelled Phoebus, who is the god of the Sun. With his feet on the earth he reached to heaven with his head and held in his hand an orb that signified that Rome ruled over the whole world.[31]

---

[30] Francis Morgan Nichols, ed. & trans. The Marvels of Rome: Mirabilia Urbis Romae, 2nd ed. (New York: Italica Press, 1986).

[31] Nichols, p. 28.

Neither earthquakes nor the elements were primarily responsible for the destruction of the city of antiquity; nor were invasions from the north the cause. Benedict writes:

> After some time the Blessed Silvester ordered that temple destroyed and likewise other palaces so that the orators who came to Rome would not wander through profane buildings but instead pass with devotion through the churches.[32]

The dismantling of edifices from the past seems to have been not only a matter of convenience in the supply of building materials, but a matter of policy. The monk continues:

> ...at the Cistern [there was] a temple called Holovitreum, made of glass and gold by mathematical craft. Here was an astrograph with all the signs of the heavens. It was destroyed by Saint Sebastian with Tibertius, the son of Chromatius.[33]

The statue 'Colossus' from which the Colosseum received its name was described by Ranulf Higden (ca. 1280-1364), a Benedictine monk and historian. The fate of the sculpture is significant:

---

[32] Ibid., p. 29.

[33] Ibid., p. 45.

> This brazen statue, gilded with imperial gold, continually shed rays through the darkness and turned round in even movement with the sun, carrying his face always opposite to the solar body; and all Romans, when they came near, worshipped in token of subjection. The which Saint Gregory destroyed by fire, as he might not do so by strength; and only the head and the right hand holding a sphere outlasted the fire, as they are now upon two marble pillars before the palace of my lord Pope. And it is a marvel how the founder's craft hath so informed the stubborn brass, that the hair seemeth soft to the sight and the mouth as though it were speaking.[34]

Nichols believes this to have been the Colossus of Nero, ninety-nine feet high in gilt bronze.[35]

It is clear, then, that the Roman state did not wither away but was physically dismantled just as the building blocks which were used to create Renaissance palaces. The lamentable aspects of this human activity were noted by the foremost carriers of culture, the poets, creatures of their time who saw the dawn of a new civilization. Benedict writes:

> Behind the palace [of Alexander], where the Shell now is, was the Temple of Bellona. There it was written:
>
> > Old Rome was I, now new Rome shall be praised;
> > I bear my head aloft, from ruin raised.[36]

---

[34]. Ibid., p. 65.

[35]. Ibid., p. 65.

[36]. Ibid., p. 37.

Although there is no direct evidence of du Bellay's familiarity with the above text, it at least testifies to the level of general knowledge passed on from antiquity; this is the Rome which cannot be found in Rome. We may find the roots of du Bellay's thought in the works of Poggio Bracciolini, who in 1430 wrote:

> ...fortune offers no more striking example of her own mutability than the city of Rome [...] the city which was described by Lucian [...] as a bit of paradise. [...] stripped of all beauty, it now lies prostrate like a giant corpse, decayed and everywhere eaten away.[37]

Poggio continues with an inventory of that which has survived, corrects Petrarch concerning the tomb of Remus, and describes the fallen state of Rome with almost dispassionate realism.[38] Thirty years later Rome had already begun to rise from the rubble to the extent that Bartolomeo Platina could approvingly quote the epitaph of Pope Nicholas (d. 1455): "Here lie the bones of the fifth pope Nicholas, who restored the Golden Age to you, O Rome..."[39]

The city named in Sonnet 17 of Les Antiquitez is now the poet's city and the poet's world:

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[37]. Poggio Bracciolini, "The Ruins of Rome" in J. B. Ross and M. M. McLaughlin, eds. The Portable Renaissance Reader (New York: The Viking Press, 1966, pp. 379-384.

[38]. Ibid., p. 383f.

[39]. Bartolomeo Platino, "The Restoration of Rome" in J. B. Ross and M. M. McLaughlin, eds. The Portable Renaissance Reader, 385-387, p. 385.

Rome fut tout le monde, & tout le monde est Rome.
Et si par mesmes noms mesmes choses on nomme,
Comme du nom de Rome on se pourroit passer,

La nommant par le nom de la terre & de l'onde,
Ainsi le monde on peult sur Rome compasser,
Puis que le plan de Rome est la carte du monde.[40]

In Sonnet 27 there is an almost vampiric description of the renaissance of Rome, calling to mind the deathly imagery of Poggio:

Regarde apres, comme de jour en jour
Rome fouillant son antique sejour,
Se rebatist de tant d'oeuvres divines.

Tu jugeras que le daemon romain
S'efforce encor d'une fatale main
Ressusciter ces poudreuses ruines.[41]

Rome has become a *persona*, rising from the grave like a zombie and plundering the corpses of the public edifices of antiquity. Contemporary architects are not alone in pillaging the works of Augustan Rome; poets are busily engaged in the same pursuit. The difference between the two lies in the ability of the poet to build upon the artefacts of the past without deconstructing them permanently.

The image of the grave seen in Sonnet 27 finds reinforcement in Sonnet 29 of Les Antiquitez: "Rome vivant fut l'ornement du monde,/Et morte elle est du monde le tumbeau.[42] Du Bellay is resurrecting the image of Rome using the building blocks of his native language, for the greater glory of France. Yet his French poetry is as indebted to Roman as the poet himself is to Rome. We may say with hindsight that du Bellay's sejour in the Eternal City was, if not happy, at least fortunate; for he built his French poetry and consequently his own reputation upon the ruins of Rome and the poets who had sung of them. His friend Jacques Peletier du Mans had written:

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[40] Du Bellay, *Les Antiquitez*, p. 16.

[41] Ibid., p. 16.

> Si les Grecs son si forts fameux,
> Si les Latins sont aussi telz
> Pour quoy ne faisons-nous comme eux
> Pour estre comme eux immortelz?[43]

The Tiber without du Bellay would maintain its slow course; du Bellay without Rome would be a defender of the French language in theory only, an Odysseus without an Odyssey. While his French poetry owes a debt to Rome, his Latin verse is even more indebted to the classical Roman tradition. P. Grimal asks:

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[42]. Ibid., p. 17.

[43]. Jacques Peletier du Mans, quoted by Alphonse Seche in J. du Bellay (Paris: Louis Michaud Editeur, ca. 1908), iv.

> Quel spectacle lui offrait la ville, en ce milieu du XVIe siècle? Lui-même l'a peint dans un poême latin, une Description de Rome, écrite, selon la tradition de Rutilius Namatianus, en vers où l'on retrouve des fragments de Prosperce, d'Ovide et de Virgile.[44]

Romae descriptio has become inaccessible; the modern world can either learn Latin or be content with a description of a description such as H. Chamard eloquently provides of du Bellay's verbal portrait. He explains why du Bellay chose to compose his verses in Latin:

> ... par ferveur d'humaniste, du Bellay n'a pas cru qu'on put dignement parler de la ville éternelle dans une autre langue que la langue du lieu. Son poême [...] est une curieuse peinture de Rome vue dans son ensemble.[45]

Chamard renders a French poetry-in-prose explication of the contents, but finally is unwilling to "l'affaiblir par une traduction", reproducing a central passage of strophes in the original Latin. The nucleus of this twenty-two line quotation is :

> Heu tantum imperium terrisque undisque superbum
> Et ferro et flamma corruit in cineres.[46]

Chamard argues that du Bellay contrasts the fleeting nature of mortal, material works to the infinite duration of works of the spirit: the most beautiful monuments perish, but poetry is immortal and renders immortal that which it has touched.[47]

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[44]. Pierre Grimal, in Joachim du Bellay, Les Regrets suivis des Antiquites de Rome, p. 14.

[45]. Henri Chamard, Histoire de la Pléiade, Vol. II (Paris: Henri Didier, 1939), p. 38.

[46]. Du Bellay, Romae descriptio in Ibid., p. 39.

The meaning here is different from that in the first tercet of _Les Antiquitez_, Sonnet 7, seen above; whether the ideas are in conflict depends on whether "_oeuvres et noms_" (Castiglione: "_l'opre e i nomi_") are interpreted as referring only to things material or to works of the mind as well. A logical interpretation of Sonnet 7 would flow from Sonnet 5, here rendered with the first quatrain omitted:

> Rome n'est plus, & si l'architecture
> Quelque umbre encor de Rome fait revoir,
> C'est comme un corps par magique sçavoir
> Tiré de nuict hors de sa sepulture.
>
> Le corps de Rome en cendre est devallé,
> Et son esprit rejoindre s'est allé
> Au grand esprit de ceste masse ronde.
>
> Mais ses escriptes, qui son loz le plus beau
> Malgré le temps arrachent du tumbeau
> Font son idole errer parmy le monde.[48]

Again there is a personification of Rome, from her sepulchre untimely ripped. Omnipresent is the spirit of Rome, which in an Ovidian or even Buddhist sense has become a part of the world spirit, the _Weltgeist_. This spirit is reincarnated in some literary works, but even without them it would continue to hold sway over occidental culture.

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[47]. Chamard, Vol. II, p. 40.

[48]. Du Bellay, _Les Antiquitez_, p. 5.

In Sonnet 15 of Les Antiquitez[49] the poetic voice asks what the ancients think now, in their place beyond the Styx, of the fate of their ouvrage. Were they able to answer, they might say that the higher expression of human civilization is not the material artefact but the literary artefact which the material inspires: Rome is resurrected and lives again even in that verse which, attempting to bury the city, ends by praising it: "Heureux, de qui la mort de sa gloire est suivi."[50]

It is fitting that at least one evaluation of du Bellay's Antiquitez be a Roman word. G. Marchi writes:

> Il mito di Roma si esprime in sublimità e profondità nelle Antiquités de Rome e, se tende a svanire nella prima parte dei Regrets, sotto la spinta della vena elegiaca e della satira dei costumi romani, proprio allora riprende vigore, dando a Du Bellay la definitiva esperienze e maturità per mezzo dell'amore, e Roma riemerge, al termine della crisi, nella sua moltiplice e complessa realtà, come paradigma della vita e compendio del mondo.[51]

Rehm explains the intellectual tradition which lies behind the topos of the ruins of Rome and its renewed vigour in new literary languages:

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[49]. Ibid., "Palles Esprits...", p. 10.

[50]. Ibid., Les Regrets, Sonnet 20, p. 50.

[51]. G. Marchi, I sonetti romani di Du Bellay (Roma: Mario Bulzone Editore, 1974), p. 17.

> Der antik-heidnische Fortuna-Gedanke [...] praegt seit Petrarca als Leitmotiv der Renaissance-Weltanschauung die humanistisch-lateinische und nationalsprachliche Rom-Dichtung, er leiht ihr Inhalt und Nachdruck. Fortuna und "virtus", Fortuna und "ratio" liegen im Widerstreit. Fortuna, die nicht zu fesselnde Gewalt, erringt den Sieg und macht die "ratio" zunichte. Fortuna erscheint wie eine, freilich launische Gewaehr dafuer, dass auch Rom samt seiner "virtu ordinata" in den allgemeinen unausweichlichen Vorgang des Sterbens und Vergehens verhaftet ist. Du Bellay hat sich, uebrigens wie der Spanier Quevedo, das wirkungsvolle Epigram des Janus Vitalis angeeignet, es in seine heimische Sprache und auch in sein persoenliches Empfinden kunstvoll und elegant uebertragen, vermutlich weil es die eigenen, sich langsam vertiefenden Rom-Eindrücke fassen konnte.[52]

In his *imitatio* of Janus Vitalis Du Bellay surpasses the self-centred tone of *Les Regrets* and arrives at a universality which has often escaped poets whose themes are primarily patriotic:

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[52]. Rehm, p. 96.

Nouveau venu, qui cherches Rome en Rome
Et rien de Rome en Rome n'apperçois,
Ces vieux palais, ces vieux arcz que tu vois,
Et ces vieux murs, c'est ce que Rome on nomme.

Voy quel orgueil, quelle ruine: et comme
Celle qui mist le monde sous ses loix,
Pour donter tout, se donta quelquefois,
Et devint proye au temps, qui tout consomme.

Rome de Rome est le seul monument,
Et Rome Rome a vaincu seulement.
Le Tybre seul, qui vers la mer s'enfuit,

Reste de Rom. O mondaine inconstance!
Ce qui est ferme, est par le temps destruit,
Et ce qui fuit, au temps fait resistance.[53]

Du Bellay brings to the poetic tradition an almost Baroque view of the transience of worldly things. Schwaderer writes:

> Die vergangene [...] und bereits barocke Gedanken der Vergaenglichkeit alles Irdischen stehen in dieser Sammlung [Les Antiquitez] in engsten Verbindung. [...] Die schwermutigen Meditationen beim Anblick der Ruinen Roms weisen aber nicht nur auf den literarischen Barock sondern auch auf die Ruinenpoesie der Fruehromantik weiter.[54]

In what might be seen as the upward spiral of culture, Edmund Spenser (ca. 1522-1599) translated Les Antiquitez, creating a garland of new poems. His "Rome in Rome" sonnet compares favourably with its twentieth-century imitator's version, that of Ezra Pound.[55] Spenser's version carries the dignity of Elizabethan English:

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[53]. Du Bellay, Lez Antiquitez Sonnet 3, reproduced in Rehm, p. 96f.

[54]. Schwaderer, p. 176.

Thou stranger, which for Rome in Rome here seekest,
And nought of Rome in Rome perceiv'st at all,
These same olde walls, olde arches, which thou seest,
Olde Palaces, is that which Rome men call.

Behold what wreake, what ruine, and what wast,
And how that she, which with her mightie powre
Tam'd all the world, hath tam'd herselfe at last,
The pray of time, which all things doth devowre.

Rome now of Rome is th'onely funerall,
And onely Rome of Rome hath victorie;
Ne ought save Tyber hastning to his fall
Remaines of all: O worlds inconstancie.

That which is firme doth flit and fall away,
And that is flitting, doth abide and stay.[56]

Like Quevedo (1580-1645) in his rendering of the same sonnet, Spenser not only crosses the frontiers of language but also of Zeitgeist. Spenser's is an Elizabethan sonnet, less Roman than Baroque. Rehm, however, observes Baroque tendencies even in du Bellay's Sonnet 3:

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[55]. Ezra Pound's translation is in Robert M. Adam, Proteus, His Lies, His Truth (Ney York: W. W. Norton & Company Inc., 1979), p. 96f.

[56]. Edmund Spenser, in The Yale Edition of the Shorter Poems of Edmund Spenser, ed. William A. Oram et al. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), p. 386f.

> Wichtiger aber war, dass Spenser in der Uebertragung der Rom-Sonette du Bellays den schon vorhandenen barocken Grundzug noch verstaerkte, indem er die Bilder weitete und die Worte ueber die franzoesische Vorlage hinaus in ihrem Gefuehlswert steigerte oder gleichsam erhitzte: als ob er, mehr noch bewegt von den Launen Fortunas als vom Sturz weltgebietender Macht, das Ganze auf die Ebene eines leidenschaftlicheren Empfindens habe hinaufheben wollen.[57]

According to Rehm many more of the sonnets of Les Antiquitez exhibit characteristics of the Baroque:

> Barocker Geist ist in diesem Sonett-Zyklus im Ansatz schon zu spueren: der Zug zum Grossen, Gewaltigen, roemische Macht und Pracht, roemisches Pathos, das langsam im Barockjahrhundert wieder zur Weltherrschaft, zu einem neuen "imperium Romanum" in Frankreich, dem Erben Roms, antritt.[58]

One might well conclude that Rehm's Europaeische Romdichtung was written in the spirit of its own time: the years before the Second World War.

Let us now turn our eyes eastward. During du Bellay's formative years in France, Poland and Lithuania were governed by Zygmunt I (the Elder, 1506-1548) and Queen Bona Sforza, under whose reign a Renaissance culture flourished.[59] The name of Mikołaj Kopernik (Copernicus, 1473-1543) is known more widely than is the environment which produced him; he did not walk out of the forest into the pages of history, nor was his Poland that into which

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[57]. Rehm, p. 132.

[58]. Ibid., p. 116.

[59]. See also Jan Gintel, Jan Matejko: Poczet królów polskich (Kraków: Wyd. Artystyczno-Graficzne, 1967), "Zygmunt I Stary", n. pag.

Shakespeare's Fortinbras forayed. One generation after Spenser's death, Poland had a lively Baroque literary culture with deep roots in the Italian and Polish Renaissance. At that time the poet honoured with laurels by Pope Urban VIII was not a Frenchman following in the footsteps of du Bellay, but a Pole, Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski, S.J. (1595-1640), whose religion was Roman, whose vision was catholic, and whose poetic inspiration was Horatian. In his Iter Romanum he wrote:

> Hanc circum tot jam lassantur saecula molem,
>   Et senium mundi grande fatigat opus.
> Interitus abiise suo tot vidit in ortu,
>   Regnaque dum pereunt, nascitur una domus.[60]
>
> [Pod stopami ich wieki w pochodzie się nużą,
>   Ich głaz klęsk się wszelakich opiera powodzi,
> Ruiny grodów widzi powalonych burzą:
>   Gdy państwa wokół giną - dom jeden się rodzi.][61]

Sarbiewski is saying that around the edifices of St. Peter's the centuries in procession are growing weary, but the stone resists destruction by all manner of floods. It sees the ruins of cities blown down by storms: yet while countries are vanishing all around, one house is being born. In these verses the voice of the Counter-Reformation is audible;

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[60]. Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski, quoted by Rehm, p. 149.

[61]. Sarbiewski, in Józef Warszawski TJ, "Dramat rzymski" Macieja Kazimierza Sarbiewskiego TJ (Romae: Typis Pontificiae Universitatis Gregorianae, 1984), p. 74. The Latin verses were translated into Polish by Tadeusz Karylowski, i.a.

reception of the poetry is likely to be favourable or unfavourable depending on the ideology or theology of the audience. For the poetry to be accepted on its own merit, one need only imagine that the subject is not St. Peter's, but the Arch of Constantine, whose name is mentioned in the preceding strophe.[62] This artistic monument could well serve as an icon representing the Renaissance and Baroque poetic treatment of the ruins of Rome. Wheeler describes the Arch:

> Its odd collection of reliefs, many of them adapted from buildings of the late first and second centuries, others newly carved in a raw but vigorous documentary stye of an alien and even original kind, others again a compromise between the two, combines strangely to produce a balanced and integrated monument which satisfies the modern eye and must be supposed to have satisfied the contemporary eye. Here in literal fashion the dichotomy is restated and in a measure healed.[63]

Having dealt briefly with the poetry of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, there is no better place to trace the evolution of the ruins of Rome as literary topos during the Romantic period than in Goethe's Roemische Elegien[64] and Byron's Childe Harold's Pilgrimage.[65] Like du Bellay and others of the Pleiade in much of their work, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) in his Roman elegies takes inspiration from Ovid. Lind writes that the epigraph for the Roman Elegies is from Ars Amatoria I. 33-34, and concludes that Ovid inspired the entire cycle of poems.[66] Nevertheless, Goethe echoes du Bellay's inherited view of Rome as the world even as his poetic voice turns back from the elegaic and dedicates itself to a romantic, optimistic form of Petrarchanism, opposed to the vision in Byron. The first quatrain of Elegy I is an invocation to Rome itself:

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[62]. Ibid., p. 74.

[63]. Mortimer Wheeler, Roman Art and Architecture (New York and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1981, 1964), p. 8.

> Saget, Steine, mir an, o sprecht, ihr hohen Palaeste!
> Strassen, redet ein Wort! Genius, regst du dich nicht?
> Ja, es its alles beseelt in deinen heiligen Mauern,
> Ewige Roma; nur mir schweiget noch alles so still.[67]

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[64] L. K. Lind, trans. and ed. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's Roman Elegies and Venetian Epigrams (Lawrence, Manhattan and Wichita: The University Press of Kansas, 1974), p. 179.

[65] Lord Byron, Childe Harold's Pilgrimage (London: John Murray, 1837).

[66] Lind, p. 179.

[67] Goethe, in Dominik Jost, ed. Goethes "Roemische Elegien" (Pullach bei Muenchen: Verlag Dokumentation, 1974), p. 99.

[Call to me, stones, O speak, you tall palazzi!
Talk to me, streets! Genius of Rome, won't you stir?
Yes, everything here in your holy walls has a soul
Roma eternal: yet all to me only is still.][68]

The programme of the poet is revealed in the concluding sestet of the same elegy, in which he writes not of ruins but of love:

Noch betracht ich Kirch und Palast, Ruinen
und Saeulen
Wie ein bedaechtiger Mann schiklich die Reise benutzt.
Doch bald ist es vorbei; dann wird ein einziger
Tempel
Amors Tempel, nur sein, der den Geweihten empfaengt.
Eine Welt zwar bist du, o Rom; doch ohne die Liebe
Waere die Welt nicht die Welt, waere den Rom auch
nicht Rom.[69]

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[68]. Goethe, in Lind., p. 39.

[69]. Goethe, in Jost, p. 99.

[As yet I regard church and palace, the ruins
and columns,
Like a thoughtful traveler who's making the most
of his trip
Which soon has to end; there will be for him only
one temple,
The temple of Love, to receive him as its devotee.
You are indeed a world, O Rome; yet without Love's
passion
The world would not be the world, Rome would not be
Rome.][70]

In 1896 the young Luigi Pirandello (1867-1936) translated these elegies; the result is more sonorous even than the original. Consider the last two strophes again:

In vero, O Roma, un mondo sei tu; ma pur senza l'amore
Non saria mondo il mondo, e nemmen Roma, Roma.[71]

Pirandello begins his work with a dedicatory sonnet in the spirit of Goethe to the illustrator of the translation, showing that his Rome, like Goethe's, has become a locus amoenus.[72] Goethe's salute to Rome is a cursory, passing gesture; it is love which in the poet's opinion gives meaning to existence, and whether the physical setting for this love is a heap of rubble or Arcadia is immaterial, for the elegies are dominated by organic images from nature which stress the harmony and not the opposition of forces. In contrast, that which love brought Castiglione's and du Bellay's poetic personae is only sorrow.

In Byron's Childe Harold's Pilgrimage the vision of

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[70] Ibid., p. 39.

[71] W. v. Goethe, Elegie Romane, trans. Luigi Pirandello (Livorno: Raff. Giusti Editore, 1896), p. 11.

[72] Luigi Pirandello, in Ibid., p. 7.

Rome is modelled upon, in Byron's words, "the celebrated letter of Servius Suplicius to Cicero"[73] and on Poggio, whose meditations on the ruins of Rome, cited above, Byron renders in the original Latin as a footnote.[74] Romantic and Renaissance writers were referring to the same literary predecessors; both du Bellay's and Byron's visions of Rome were affected by the same texts.

Byron differs from du Bellay and Goethe in that he writes against solipsism. Stanza LXXVIII of Canto IV reads:

> Oh Rome! my country! city of the soul!
> The orphans of the heart must turn to thee,
> Lone mother of dead empires! and control
> In their shut breasts their petty misery.
> What are our woes and sufferance? Come and see
> The cypress, hear the owl, and plod your way
> O'er steps of broken thrones and temples, Ye!
> Whose agonies are evils of a day-
> A world is at our feet as fragile as the clay.[75]

Byron appears to be demystifying the sentimental vision of Rome without sacrificing the philosophical and aesthetic value of historical consciousness. The poetic voice is contemptuous of those whose reactions to the ruins of Rome are a case of conventionalized sentimentality. In Canto IV, LXXXI the poet declaims:

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[73]. footnote by Byron to Canto IV, XLIV in Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, p. 193.

[74]. Poggio Bracciolini is quoted by Byron in Ibid., p. 194 n. 1.

[75]. Ibid., p. 210.

> The double night of ages, and of her,
> Night's daughter, Ignorance, hath wrapt and wrap
> All round us; we but feel our way to err:
> The ocean hath his chart, the stars their map,
> And Knowledge spreads them on her ample lap;
> But Rome is as the desert, where we steer
> Stumbling o'er recollections; now we clap
> Our hands and cry, "Eureka!" it is clear-
> When but some false mirage of ruin rises near.[76]

Byron places the fall of Rome into an historical perspective which in its cyclical nature is both ancient and modern:

> There is the moral of all human tales;
> 'Tis but the same rehearsal of the past,
> First Freedom, and then Glory - when that fails
> Wealth, vice, corruption - barbarism at last.[77]

The description of the Pantheon in Canto IV, CXLVII shows it to be a microcosm representing Rome itself, as the Arch of Constantine could conceivably have been used by du Bellay:

> Relic of nobler days, and noblest arts!
> Despoil'd yet perfect, with thy circle spreads
> A holiness appealing to all hearts-
> To art a model; and to him who treads
> Rome for the sake of ages, Glory sheds
> Her light through thy sole aperture; to those
> Who worship, here are altars for their beads,
> And they who feel for genius may repose
> Their eyes on honour'd forms, whose busts around them close.[78]

The tone is slightly jocose here; Byron is referring to the use of old forms to honour new luminaries. New, contemporary busts of the august citizens of Rome have replaced the gods of old. Yet even this process is a part of the flow of human history and as such has both poetic and philosophical validity. The overriding tone is one of melancholy and resignation. Trueblood states of Byron's verse:

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[76]. Ibid., p. 210.

[77]. Ibid., p. 219.

[78]. Ibid., p. 235.

> In the section on the ruins of Rome, the poet goes back to the Renaissance tradition of Petrarch and Poggio; and the spirit of Gibbon's final chapter- the triumph of time over all things mortal- permeates the fourth canto.[79]

A common thread running through the verses seen thus far, whether Renaissance, Baroque or Romantic, is the humanistic striving for eternal truths: a realization of the finite nature of human existence and an attempt to reconcile finity and infinity through an idealism which puts man at the centre of a cyclical process, his governing spirit being a fragment of, or at least in harmony with, the Weltgeist. The thunderbolt of Zeus and the hand of God are conspicuously absent from the machinations of human fate, but if there were no mortality there would be no immortality. If there were no death, there would be no time.

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[79]. Paul G. Trueblood, Lord Byron (Boston: G. K. Halll & Co., 1977), p. 91f.

The Slavic counterparts to the occidental Romantic poets whose discourse centred on the ruins of Rome are Evgenij A. Baratynskij (1800-1844) and Zygmunt Krasiński (1812-1859), both of whose verses are not only examples of virtuosity, but are intellectually stimulating in a way that Goethe's do not attempt to be. Throughout their Roman poetry the Russian "poet of thought" and the Polish "poet of the ruins" bring a fresh spirit to an already familiar subject. Aleksandr S. Pushkin writes of his Russian contemporary:

> [Baratynskij] would be original everywhere, for he thinks in his own way, truly and independently, while he feels intensely and deeply. The harmony of his verse, the freshness of his style, the verve and precision of expression must impress everyone, even someone poorly endowed with taste and feeling.[80]

In 1944 Boris Eikhenbaum wrote of Baratynskij's verses:

> ...dazhe v samykh intimnykh i lichnykh ego stikhakh zvuchit golos pokoleniya, golos istorii, a vovse ne ot'edinennoj ot mira lichnosti. On - chelovek muzhestvennykh, sil'nykh, strastnykh chuvstv i glubokikh dum o zhizni.[81]

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[80] A. S. Pushkin, Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v desiati tomakh, 3rd ed. (Moskva: Akademiia Nauk SSSR, 1962-1966), 221, quoted by Benjamin Dees, Evgeny Baratynsky (New York: Twayne Publishers Inc., 1972), p. 136f.

[81] Boris Eikhenbaum, O poezii (Leningrad: 1969), p. 320, quoted by V. S. Kiselev ed., in E. A. Baratynskij, Polnoe sobranie stikhotvorenij (Leningrad: Izd. "Sovetskij pisatel'", 1989), p. 6.

Eikhenbaum is saying that even in the most intimate and personal of the poet's verses there sounds the voice of the generation, the voice of history, yet with an individuality in no way isolated from the world. Baratynskij is, according to Eikhenbaum, a man of brave, strong, ardent feelings and deep thoughts about life. Baratynskij's "Rim" (Rome) seeks to learn the lessons of Rome and apply them on a wider scale to the historical process. In the poet's mind is the city founded by the Russian Czar. Much is lost in translation due to the lack of an equivalent in English for Church Slavonic words and the tone they impart to the theme. The present author's translations do not attempt to reproduce the originals but rather to explain them.

Ty byl li, gordyj Rim, zemli samovlastitel',
Ty byl li, o svobodnyj Rim?
K nemym razvalinam tvoim
Podkhodit s grustiyu ikh chuzhdyj navestitel'.

Za chto utratil ty velich'e prezhnikh dnej?
Za chto, derzhavnyj Rim, tebya zabyli bogi?
Grad pyshnyj, gde tvoi chertogi?
Gde sil'nye tvoi, o rodina muzhej?

Tebe li izmenil pobedy moshchnyj genij?
Ty l'na rasputii vremen
Stoish v pozorishche plemen,
Kak pyshnyj sarkofag pogibshikh pokolenij?

Komu eshche grozish' s tvoikh semi kholmov?
Sud'by li vsekh derzhav ty groznyj vozvestitel'
Ili, kak prizrak-obvinitel',
Pechal'nyj predstoish' ocham tvoikh synov?[82]

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[82]. E. A. Baratynskij, Polnoe sobranie stikhotvorenij, p. 89.

[Was this you, proud Rome, the world's autocrat,
Was this you, o free Rome?
To your mute ruins
Come in their sorrow the alien visitors.

Why did you lose the greatness of former days?
Why, mighty Rome, did the gods forget you?
Magnificent city, where are your features?
Where is your strength, O native land of courage?

Was it you whom the victories of powerful genius
betrayed?
You, the unravelled linen of time
Who stand in a disgraceful community
Like the splendid sarcophagus of lost generations?

Whom else do you threaten from your seven hills?
Of the fate of all States are you the dread harbinger
Or is it as a spectral accuser
That you stand in the eyes of your sons?]

As in the poems of du Bellay, rather than concrete images of physical places there is an abstraction, a generality, and a movement toward intellectual understanding rather than a simple expression of emotion.[83] Dees writes of the elegy:

> Transience and instability are symbolized by the silent ruins of a once-powerful imperial capital, now forgotten by the gods. Its antiquity is enveloped in an austere and solemn framework and intensified by use of Church Slavonic words. [...] Built on a string of rhetorical questions, the verse texture, as distinct from the imagery, acquires an impression of both solidity and substantiality [...] Highlighting the ethereal atmosphere in this vision is the sweeping depiction in the third stanza, where the city, as if suspended in a timeless moment stands on the "crossroads of the ages" like a "grand sarcophagus of perished generations."[84]

Dees suggests that this poem introduces into Russian literature a theme later to become prominent: "the spectral images of Petersburg evoked by Pushkin, Dostoevsky, and Andrey Bely, among others".[85] As a youth the poet had learned French from his Italian tutor, Giacinto Borghese, who nourished Baratynskij's infatuation with the Classical French poets and spoke endlessly of Rome and Naples.[86] Since the Russian saw Naples and then died there without ever visiting Rome, one can easily surmise that part of the poet's early literary images of Rome came from the poetry of du Bellay, who wrote of matters close to the tutor's heart.

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[83]. See also Dees, p. 39.

[84]. Ibid., p. 39.

Of the Slavic poets it is Zygmunt Krasiński who stands closest to the ruins of Rome, both in terms of his emotional attachment and the creative energy of his oeuvre, which on this subject alone is almost equal in volume to du Bellay's Antiquitez. He expresses this emotional proximity by having one of his personae choose her place of burial:

> Słuchaj - w tych dolinach
> Ty mnie pochowasz przy Rzymu ruinach,
> A grób mój będzie otoczon wzgórzami,
> Zakryty zewsząd bluszczem i głogami-[87]
>
> [Listen - in these valleys
> You will bury me near the ruins of Rome
> And my grave will be surrounded by hills,
> Covered on all sides with ivy and hawthorn-]

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[85]. Ibid., p. 39.

[86]. Ibid., p. 16.

[87]. Zygmunt Krasiński, Dzieła literackie, Vol. I, ed. Paweł Herz (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1973), p. 18.

The third Polish Romantic bard, after Mickiewicz (1798-1855) and Słowacki (1809-1849), found in this subject the most suitable vehicle for his historiosophical passion. The need which he felt to justify his political stance within the community of Polish writers and artists in exile provided motivation for the creation of pensive works of the intellect:

> Tu żywych nie patrz - tu umarłych włości:
> Pałace dumnych, w żołty piasek wryte,
> Kościoły bogów, na szczątki rozbite,
> Zielonym bluszczu całunem obwite!
> Czas poćwiertował posągi cezarów,
> Czas zmienił Forum na błotnisty parów,
> Gdzie zaspy gruzów piętrzą się warstwami,
> Gdzie odkopane koryncKie kolumny,
> Jak dusze na wpół wychylone z trumny,
> Sterczą wysmukłe nad Rzymu lochami
> -
> świątyń prochami.[88]

> [Search not for the living - here are the estates of the dead:
> Palaces of the proud, in yellow sand imprinted,
> Churches of the gods, shattered into fragments
> Wrapped in green ivy shroud!
> Time has quartered the statues of the emperors,
> Time has changed the Forum into a muddy ravine
> Where mounds of rubble pile up in layers
> Where dug-out Corynthian columns,
> As souls emerging from a coffin,
> Protrude slenderly above the dungeons of Rome
> -
> ashes of temples.]

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[88] Ibid., p. 19f.

Ghoulish imagery has been associated with the ruins of Rome at least since Poggio. In his poem "Poeta" (The Poet), composed in Rome in 1840, Krasiński transfers the image of resurrection from the Roman ruins to the poet, hoping for rebirth in his own Exigi monumentum. This wish seems to have been granted, for Krasiński's poems and Romantic dramas have recently attracted renewed attention. This is "Poeta":

Ty z grobu wstaniesz, młody, nieśmiertelny -
A proch twój tylko w grobie tym zaginie!
I wdzięczność ludzi postawi twe imię
W ducha ludzkiego ponadziemskim Rzymie,
Gdzie tym, co legli z namiętnej miłości
Dla chwały świata, dla dobra ludzkości,
Posągi stawią od pory do pory,
Na szczeblach wieków, jasne, widne z dala,
By czasu nigdzie nie wstrzymana fala
Tam się wstrzymała, gdzie tryumfatory!
I czas tam staje, niby patrzy, słucha -
I dziwną pieśnią, wieczności westchnieniem,
Oblewa, płacząc, te posągi ducha,
Nie marmurowym wykute kamieniem![89]

[You will rise from the grave, young, immortal -
And only your ashes will disappear in this grave!
And the gratitude of the people will place your name
In the humane soul of superterrestrial Rome,
Where for those who have fallen from ardent love
For the glory of the world, for the good of humanity,
Statues will be erected from time to time,
On the rungs of centuries, bright, visible from afar,
So that the hitherto irresistible wave of time
There be halted where the conquerors are!
And time stops there, as if to look, to listen -
And with a strange song, with the sigh of eternity,
Washes, weeping, these statues of the soul
Not sculpted of marble!]

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[89]. Ibid., 41-45, p. 45.

Rarely does a poet so identify with a topos that his social self is defined through it. In a letter to Konstanty Gaszyński (1809-1866) he introduces a new poem with a request:

> Odpisz mi do Rzymu, tam zapewne zimę przebędę. Takem przylgnął, nie do ludzi, ale do kamieni tamtejszych, że czasem zamiast podpisu mego gotów bym nabazgrać: Rzymska Kampania.[90]

> [Answer me in Rome; I shall probably spend the winter there. I have taken a fancy not so much to the people, but to the stones there, that sometimes instead of my signature I am ready to write: Campagne of Rome.]

The poem above shows that unlike Childe Harold's narrator, whose poetic ego was temporarily submerged in contemplation, Krasiński's concerns are in this instance centred on the self and on lasting fame; this is confirmed in a more explicit and self-conscious statement of his poetic purpose:

> To miasto wiecznym, w tych grobach jest życie,
> Które pod ziemią spokojnie i skrycie
> Krąży krwią wieków i serce spokoi,
> A może czoło w laur wieków ustroi.
> Może kto kiedyś na jednym z tych wzgórzów,
> Wśród prochu bogów i gruzu podmurzów,
> Gdzie róż i bluszczu powiązane zwoje,
> Bluszcz gdy odchyli, znajdzie imię moje![91]

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[90] Zygmunt Krasiński, letter to Konstanty Gaszyński in Ibid., Vol. III, p. 342.

[91] Ibid., Vol. I, p. 58.

[This city is eternal; there is life in its graves
Which under the ground quietly and secretly
Circulates with the blood of centuries and calms
the heart,
And may garland the forehead with the laurel of ages.
Perhaps someone, someday on one of these hills,
Midst the gods' ashes and the rubble of fundaments,
Where rose and ivy are tied in scrolls,
While bending the ivy back, will find my name!]

In a longer poem, "Do Elizy"[92] (To Eliza) the author of Nieboska komedia (The Undivine Comedy) and Irydion (Iridion) devotes fifty-one strophes to the victory of Christianity over polytheism and in doing so alludes to the eventual victory of Poland in its struggle for freedom. Rome was golden and proud, but unjust; the obvious subtext is that Russia bears the same relationship to Poland as did Rome to Christianity. These verses foreshadow the theme of his last great work, Irydion,[93] in which the lessons of history are applied to the situation of Poland. Backvis notes that Krasiński is following Polish precedents in the use of the historical metaphor: those of Piotr Ciekliński, Jakub Górski and Piotr Skarga, all of whose works appeared in 1597.[94] Ciekliński's adaptation of a comedy of Plautus brought to fruition an exhortation by Jan Ostroróg (ca. 1436-1501) which both in terms of his defense of the new literary language and the attitude toward ancient Rome is reminiscent of du Bellay, but predates his Défense et Illustration de la Langue Francaise (1549) by half a century:

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[92]. Ibid., pp. 115-117.

[93]. Krasiński, op. cit., pp. 559-766.

[94]. Claude Backvis, "Polish Tradition and the Concept of History in Iridion", trans. Kurth Pyle, in Wacław Lednicki, ed. Zygmunt Krasiński: Romantic Universalist (Brooklyn, N. Y.: Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences in America, Inc., 1964), 85-118, p. 103f.

> Leave your toga, Plautus, and put on our peasant capote,
> Speak Polish to us, so that our own may understand
> What your own didn't want to listen to.
> Maybe when they see why this unyielding Rome
> Has perished, although greater, and has lost liberty,
> The Poles will want to lend you an attentive ear,
> And then at last you will gather the fruit of your labour.[95]

Krasiński is writing for a Polish audience, applying the lessons of Rome to what for his compatriots was the most important issue of the time: the national identity and freedom from domination.

Referring to the prose of Pushkin, Jurij Lotman maintains that prose can be perceived to be prose only against the background of poetry.[96] Prose works on the ruins of Rome exhibit a consciousness of their poetic heritage and themselves often strive for poetic effect. George R. Noyes observes of Count Krasiński's drama Irydion[97] that it is prose in form but poetic and prophetic in spirit.[98]

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[95]. Jan Ostroróg, quoted in Ibid., p. 103.

[96]. Jurij Lotman, The Structure of the Artistic Text, trans. Ronald Vroon (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1977.

[97]. Krasiński, Irydion in Dzieła, Vol. I, pp. 559-766.

[98]. George Rapall Noyes, in Zygmunt Krasiński, Iridion, trans. Florence Noyes (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1975, 1927), p. 9.

He writes: "The substance of the poem [sic] is inspired by Rome and its ruins; the central idea of it springs from reflection upon the destiny of Poland..."[99] In an outside opinion on a literature of lesser diffusion, Noyes states: "His almost lyric description of ruined Rome in the Conclusion is regarded as the masterpiece of Polish poetic prose."[100]

Published in 1836, Irydion seems to foreshadow the Symbolism of Baudelaire (1821-1867) in its attempts to evoke the mystery of life. The drama starts with an introduction which sounds like an incantation. As it is in prose, little is lost in translation:

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[99]. Ibid., p. 10f.

[100]. Ibid., p. 18.

> From the world of ruins I called forth the shades of the dead - at night upon the Forum the Senate stood before me - stooping phantoms burdened with the memory of baseness - but among them thou wast not!
>
> A gladiator arose from the subterranean vaults of the Colosseum and marched at the head of his comrades by the light of the moon- [...]
>
> On the Palatine, on the mount of ruins and of flowers, the dust of the lords of the earth became animate for me. -They swept before me- diadems soldered with blood clove to their brows [...]
>
> The hour strikes - for where the Eternal City once held sway there is to-day a wide and yawning grave, filled with bones and rubble, twined about with ivy and with a race of grovelling men. -Arise! -come forth! -I summon thee! I and a yet more awful power, from which I shall not be able to deliver thee. But thy name I will tear away from thy body [...]
>
> Ancient putrefaction shines round about like the eyes of sphinxes - a serpent with glittering scales sleeps for ages at his feet...[101]

References to the ruins of Rome are profuse in Irydion and cannot be reproduced here. Krasiński's Rome is a mixture of fragrance and decay, one adding to the other; it is also the stark biblical imagery of a city destined for destruction:

> Here in the silent arena, upon the silver sands, amid arcades transformed into wild crags with ivy upon their summits and huge rents in their bosom, thou hast thanked the Fates for the abasement of Rome![102]

In the history of European literature there is no author who has been so prolific in his use of the topos, and Irydion, a drama set in the third century of the Christian era, represents the peak of virtuosity within its field. Other works, even some works of poetry, are considerably more prosaic, yet there is always a conscious attempt on the part of writers of prose to achieve poetic literary effects.

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[101] Krasiński, Iridion, p. 30ff.

[102] Ibid., p. 231.

In Rome souterraine,[103] a prose work which is half travelogue and half novel about the Carbonari, the Swiss Charles Didier (1805-1864) writes of the ruins of Rome as perceived in a time of social and artistic ferment. Published in 1848, the literary artefact straddles the Zeitgeist which produced the Communist Manifesto and that which saw the advent of Symbolism. It describes life in the city in a time of conflict, as do some sonnets of du Bellay's Regrets. Here is Didier's literary description of the most visible ancient landmark in Rome, in which the visitor makes peace with his thoughts by adopting the position of a stoic:

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[103] Charles Didier, Rome souterraine, t. 1&2 (Paris: Paulin, ed., 1848).

> Le Colossée était desert comme le Forum. Arrachés du travail par l'emeute ou par la sieste, les maçons et les galeriens charges de l'entretien du monument étaient eux-mêmes absents; la solitude était complete.
>
> Le temps était splendide, les ruines toutes parfumées de fleurs sauvages. Voltigeant en liberté parmi les broussailles, des oiseaux de mille couleurs scintillaient au soleil; le chant gai du chardonneret se mariait au roucoulement plaintif des tourterelles nichées sous les portiques abandonnés et croulants [...].
>
> Et puis l'immensité du lieu a quelque chose en soi qui éleve et qui pacifie. Le Colossée est la plus imposante, la plus vaste ruine non-seulement de Rome, mais du monde occidental tout entier. [...] Quelle solitude ou il y eut tant d'hommes! Quel silence ou il y eut tant de bruit! Ce sont là de ces péripéties dont l'effet est puissant toujours sur les âmes intelligentes et meditatives; associee a de si grandes vicissitudes, la douleur humaine se recueille, et atteint par elles au calme stoique.[104]

The literary period of Symbolism saw the rise of Orientalism, which in large measure consisted in the feminization of the object of one's vision. Rome has been feminized throughout history, at least since the writing of Revelations.[105] Such is the strength of this portrayal of Rome as the whore of Babylon that its influence on literature and on human thought has lasted almost two millennia; in virtue of the subject under study it deserves consideration here. St. John writes:

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[104]. Ibid., t.2, p. 270.

[105]. "The Revelation to John (The Apocalypse)" in Herbert G. May and Bruce M. Metzger, eds. The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 1493-1514, Rev. 12.1 to 19.3, pp. 1503-1510.

> ...and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of blasphemous names, and it had seven heads and ten horns. The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and bedecked with gold and jewels and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her fornication; and on her forehead was written a name of mystery: "Babylon the great, mother of harlots and of earth's abominations."[106]

Commentary shows the scarlet beast to be the Roman Empire, the blasphemous names to be the divine titles given to Roman emperors, the seven heads to be the seven hills of Rome, and the writing on the forehead to be customary with Roman harlots.[107] The text leaves no doubt as to which city is meant: "...the seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman is seated",[108] she who is "drunk with the blood of the saints and the blood of the martyrs";[109] "And the woman that you saw is the great city which has dominion over the kings of the earth".[110] An angel describes the city in verses which would not be out of place in an anthology of the European poetry of the second half of the nineteenth century:

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[106]. Ibid., Rev. 17.3-5, p. 1507f.

[107]. Ibid., Annotations on p. 1507f.

[108]. Ibid., Rev. 17.9, p. 1508.

[109]. Ibid., Rev. 17.6, p. 1508.

[110]. Ibid., Rev. 17.18, p. 1508.

> "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great!
> It has become a dwelling place of demons,
> a haunt of every foul spirit,
> a haunt of every foul and hateful bird;
> for all nations have drunk the wine of her impure passion,
> and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her,
> and the merchants of the earth have grown rich with the wealth of her wantonness."[111]

The kings, the merchants, the shipmasters and the sailors all raise their voices in poetic laments over the future fall of the city; there may even be a tinge of regret in the voice of the narrator.[112] An angel demonstrates the fall of Rome by throwing a stone into the sea and saying:

> "So shall Babylon the great city be thrown down with violence, and shall be found no more;
> and the sound of harpers and minstrels, of flute players and trumpeters, shall be heard in thee no more;
> and a craftsman of any craft shall be found in thee no more;
> and the light of a lamp shall shine in thee no more;
> and the voice of the bridegroom and the bride shall be heard in thee no more;
> for thy merchants were the great men of the earth,
> and all nations were deceived by thy sorcery..."[113]

It is stylistically important that this angel provide a counterpoint to the narrator, who has just enumerated the precious cargoes which will no longer be brought to and from Rome, by providing a list of sounds which will no longer be heard in the city. He or she does not mention the predicted fate of the poetry, unless this is considered the domain of the minstrels. Written before the end of the first century A.D., the text refers to a Rome which is at the height of its power; yet the laments have already been composed for a city more feminized in literature than any other. It is significant that this was not an occidental feminization of the orient, but rather the reverse.

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[111]. Ibid., Rev. 18.2-3, p. 1508.

[112]. Ibid., Rev. 18.11-20, p. 1509.

[113]. Ibid., Rev. 18.21-23, p. 1509.

In Didier we see the metaphor itself reversed, for here a woman is portrayed as Rome:

> On eût dit que, revêtue en ce jour douloureux d'une forme humaine, Rome venait pleurer au milieu des ruines la mort de tous ses martyrs. Si cette femme isolee n'était pas la Niobe des nations, c'était bien une Niobe comme elle; elle avait a pleurer, elle aussi, bien des enfants, bien des martyrs; c'était la mère de Napoleon.[114]

The ruins of Rome have been fertile ground both for literature and for the visual arts. Didier attempts to merge the two domains in a verbal portrait:

> Un groupe de femmes des Monts devisait à la fontaine qui est sous la colonne de Constantin; la noblesse de leur taille, la pureté sévère de leur profil antique, la forme artistique des vases qui leur servaient à puiser l'eau, l'éclat du temple et des colonnes, et, par-dessus tout, l'obélisque égyptien immobile au milieu des acacias de l'Esquillin donnaient a ce rassemblement matinal je ne sais quelle physionomie orientale et biblique. On eût dit le groupe des filles de Mesopotamie à la citerne de Nacor, et Poussin a dû peindre la sa Rebecca.[115]

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[114]. Didier, p. 272.

[115]. Ibid., p. 285f.

The exterior beyond the walls of Rome seems to the narrator to be just as desolate as the interior of the colosseum:

> ...l'enceinte de Rome etait franchie; le desert appartenait aux amants, car le desert commence de tous cotes a la porte de la ville eternelle.[116]

The imagery of l'enceinte de Rome being franchie is sexual here, and the process of desertification, caused by the winds which blow uninterrupted from Africa, leads to orientalization as the breezes change direction: "...et le vent, son complicie, emporta la vierge d'Europe a l'encan des voluptes africaines.[117]

It is not so much Rome which is decadent as the spirit of the times, the appetite for voluptuousness which engenders Didier's view of Rome and things Roman. We hear echoes of Flaubert's Carthage in Didier's Rome.

For a North American view of the ruins of Rome one might turn to Didier's contemporary, William E. Channing (1780-1842), a Unitarian theologian and proponent of originality in American literature who prefaced his work Conversations in Rome[118] with a poem dedicated to the reader, composed in the spirit of his times and carrying his own agenda:

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[116]. Ibid., p. 288.

[117]. Ibid., p. 301.

[118]. William Ellery Channing, Conversations in Rome between an Artist, a Catholic, and a Critic (Boston: Wm. Crosby and H. P. Nichols, 1847).

In the austerer cities of thy soul,
Founded where winds and rains have no control;
Their architecture ribbed with subtlest thought,
Their streets that only phantom feet have sought;
There let the ruins crumble, the decay,
Like distant landscapes, smoothed by parting day.
There build thy churches, as St. Peter's high,
There Raphael paint beneath the inward sky,
And the brave Romans, - they were giant men,
Caesar and Scipio; may they live again,
Stalk through thy inward Forum! - seek no more;
The sands of Europe gleam on Salem's shore.[119]

This literary artefact has resisted the test of time, not passed it; for the following commentary on the ruins of Rome is couched in pages which to this day remain uncut, although the book was published in 1847. The 'critic' is speaking:

> Say what you will of ruins, they are but the edifices of a former nation in a condition of pitiable decay, and one must be a Poet or an Antiquarian to be sensitive to the point. I visited the Coliseum by moonlight, and though in the middle of summer, the night air beneath the damp arches was chilling to the blood, while some of the dark wicked faces of the Italians peeped out occasionally.[120]

Perhaps the Italians would answer that such pages should remain uncut, that it is an act of poetic justice.

Channing says good-bye to Rome in the spirit of Horace:

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[119]. Ibid., "To the Reader", x.

[120]. Ibid., p. 14.

Farewell to Rome! farewell the painted mask
Called life or friendship! -Lethe's all I ask,
To steep my soul in draughts of murmuring wine
And sing to Gods and men a mystic line.[121]

A final utterance places the poet ideologically within the Romantic period, a latecomer to a scene which ends one year later in the general uprising which so many poets had called for:

Farewell to rule and order! for the Muse
She does all things but bravery refuse.[122]

The New Englander's view of Rome nevertheless displays the common-sense attitude to existence: "If we resort to truth, Rome - not even Rome, is divine in a drizzle."[123] Channing believes that the most important knowledge is derived not from sense experience, but from apprehension of eternal truths.[124] It is precisely an apprehension of eternal truths which the ruins of Rome have evoked in many authors; they in turn have used the topos in order to convey these same truths.

As American literary and artistic society in the first half of this century found a second home in Paris, so the French of the nineteenth century were well housed in Rome. Edmond About writes in Rome contemporaine (1861):

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[121] Ibid., p. 141.

[122] Ibid., p. 141.

[123] Ibid., p. 139.

[124] Robert L. Patterson, "William Ellery Channing" in Encyclopedia Americana Vol. 6 (Danbury, Conn.: Americana Corp., 1979), p. 280.

> Le président [Charles] de Brosses, du temps qu'il était conseiller et qu'il montrait de si étranges figures a la portière de son carrosse, habitait a la place d'Espagne. M. de Chateaubriand se tenait a l'ambassade de France, et Mme de Staël dans les nuages. Je suis mieux logé, moi chetif, que tant de Francais illustres, et, par les deux fenêtres de mon observatoire, je vois les choses de bien plus haut.[125]

Contemplation of the ruins of Rome does not necessarily give an understanding of what once existed. Monsieur About tells the reader of an inventory dating from the sixth century A.D.:

> Suivant une statistique du sixieme siecle retrouvee par le cardinal Mai et citee par M. Ampere, la grande ville contenait encore: [...] 13052 fontaines; 31 theatres; 11 amphitheatres; [...] 9025 bains; [...] 2091 prisons; 8 grandes statues dorees; 66 statues d'ivoire; 3785 statues de bronze; 82 statues equestres de bronze; 2 colosses.[126]

For those who tend not to believe the numbers reported by antiquity, the author has his own explanation:

> Si quelq'un trouve ces chiffres invraisemblables, c'est qu'il ne connait pas les Romains, nation excessive en toutes choses, et plus exageree dans ses actions que les Grecs eux-memes dans leurs paroles.[127]

That the Gallic vision of the Romans has changed little from the time of writing can be seen in the popular works of Goscinny, the Asterix books.

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[125]. Edmond About, Rome contemporaine, 2nd ed. (Paris: Librairie du Michel Levy Freres, 1861), p. 58.

[126]. Ibid., p. 69.

[127]. Ibid., p. 69.

To bring the argument to the level of universal human experience one needs either a philosophical or an aesthetic perspective. No poetry provides both better than Slavic poetry; no poetry has played a more vital role in the formation of a national consciousness. Further Polish works viewed here will be examples from Cyprian Norwid and Czesław Miłosz, while Russian poetry will be represented by the verses of Osip E. Mandelstam. It will be seen that even in the height of innovation which took the name of Russian Acmeism, the poetic voice was still in tune with du Bellay.

Cyprian Norwid (1821-1883) remains one of the poets most difficult to categorize and, in many instances, most difficult to understand. Of the works in which the ruins of Rome figure prominently, two are prose ("Zarysy z Rzymu", 1848 and "Menego", 1850), three are poems ("Ruiny", 1849; "W albumie", 1851; and "Post scriptum", 1861-62), and one ("Quidam", 1859) is a parable-allegory in verse. In his Anthology of Polish Literature,[128] Manfred Kridl chooses to include the most mature of the above works, "Post scriptum", the last two stanzas of which are reproduced here:

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[128] Kridl, Manfred, An Anthology of Polish Literature (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957)

-Z tragedji całej klasycznego świata
Podziały znacie, a z wymowy style:
To, jakby poszedł kto na grobie brata
Herboryzować! zioła rwać!... to tyle!...?

-Kartki łacińskie przyczepiać do krzewów
Rozpłakujących się nad ruinami-
Nie! wolę smętne szumy białodrzewów
Z bezimiennemi w gwarze ruinami,
I wolę z bladym srebrnej łzy świecznikiem
W podziemia schodzić, niż z waszym słownikiem.[129]

[-From the tragedy of the whole classical world
You know classification, and from their speech, rhetorics:
It is as if someone went to the grave of his brother
To herborize! to gather herbs!... that's all!...?

-Latin sheets of paper to hang on the bushes that
Burst into tears over the ruins-
No! I prefer the melancholy rustle of white poplar
With ruins nameless in the murmuring,
And I prefer to go underground with the silver tear
Of a pale candlestick than with your dictionary.]

The poet is writing in an antischolastic vein, saying that he prefers to read classical works differently. It is better to read in silence amongst the ruins, or even by candlelight in the catacombs, than to read as an academician. Kridl interprets the underground cavern as the past,[130] but Norwid was interested in archaeology and spent long hours underground in the catacombs, looking at old frescoes and so on; he writes about it in "Czarne kwiaty" ("The Black Flowers", 1856).[131] This provides a more direct reference and might have more to do with appreciation of the visual arts than with reading. The enigmatic Pole was a sculptor and a graphic artist as well as a poet.

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[129]. Cyprian Norwid, in Ibid., p. 253.

[130]. Kridl, in Ibid., p. 271.

In his poem "Ruiny"[132], Norwid writes:

> W ruinach, w nocy, mówią się i takie słowa,
> Które gdzie indziej dziwnym brzmiałyby sposobem;
> Nie tylko bowiem z myśli jest myśli osnowa:[133]
>
> [Among the ruins, at night, such words are said
> Which elsewhere would sound strange;
> For not only from thought comes thought's structure.]

Later in the verses Norwid's poetic voice states that ruins such as the ruins of Rome will not find their equal either in time or in space, not only because they are created from a unique mixture of styles and of such beauty, but also because their significance is heightened by the fact that the Church was built upon them, and thus Christianity was born. The thought, expressed again twenty years later in

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[131] Cyprian Norwid, "Czarne kwiaty", in Pisma wybrane Vol. 4, ed. Juliusz Gomulicki (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1963, 34-46, p. 35.

[132] Cyprian Norwid, Pisma wszystkie Vol. III, ed. Juliusz Gomulicki (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1971), pp. 487-495.

[133] Ibid., p. 487.

"Rzecz o wolnosci słowa" ("Speech on the Liberty of the Word", 1869)[134] is that the work of creation and the work of destruction will join one day to form a unified whole.

Here is a loose translation of a fragment from Norwid's "Menego":

> [Only, you see, nothing which is truly beautiful has perished here, for it has within itself the immortal spark, love! To make a beautiful ruin a beautiful structure is needed; a ruin must be beautiful to survive until the end, all the way down to the fundaments and the first plan of disposition, all the way down to the first stone, on which legends will sit in heavy wreaths of ivy; all the way down to the depth under the stone, where old medals are in vases and yellow parchment with a description of the original concept! Roma, quanta fuit, ipsa ruina docet.][135]

Even the ruins show how great Rome was.

Athens and Rome seldom receive equal treatment by individual authors, most of whom seem to gravitate to one or the other. As the Zeitgeist favours Homer over Vergil, Athens becomes a more fruitful topos; Rome comes to the fore when Horace and Vergil displace the Greeks. The contrast in the literary treatment of the two cities goes beyond questions of fashion or taste. Bergengruen (1892-1964) explains what significance the two cultures might have for the twentieth century:

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[134]. Ibid., 557-623, p. 617.

[135]. Cyprian Norwid, "Menego" in Pisma wybrane, 29-33, p. 30.

> Hellas hat der reinen, von Zwecken nicht befleckten Existenz, Rom der Leistung den Ausdruck gegeben. Hellas brachte die Gestalt des Menschen frei zur Erscheinung, in Rom tritt er uns in seinen Bezuegen entgegen: als Krieger, Ackermann, Familienvater, Staatsdiener und Staatsherr. [...] In allem roemischen Wesen steckt ein Element der Trockenheit, Zweckmaessigkeit, des gefuehlsarmen Kalkuels [...] Dergleichen drueckt sich auch in der roemischen Kunst aus, die sich ja erst in der Kaiserzeit entwickelt hat, insbesondere im Gewoelbebau; hier herrscht der unbeugsame Wille, die Widerstaende des Raumes, ja eigentlich gar die der Schwerkraft zu ueberwinden.[136]

One year before his death, Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926) wrote a letter to his Polish translator on the meaning of his Duino Elegies.[137] In the middle one reads:

> ...our task is to stamp this provisional, perishing earth into ourselves so deeply, so painfully and passionately, that its being may rise again, "invisibly", in us. We are the bees of the Invisible.[138]

In his life and in his work, few accomplished this task to a greater extent than Krasiński. Rilke is of another century in terms of his Roman poems; further than Krasiński from the physical ruins, he stands halfway between Norwid and Mandelstam, but leans toward the latter. Here is a fragment from his Seventh Elegy:

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[136] Werner Bergengruen, Roemisches Erinnerungsbuch (Freiburg: Verlag Herder, 1958), p. 95.

[137] Rainer Maria Rilke, Duino Elegies, German and English trans. J. B. Leishman and S. Spender (London: The Hogarth Press, 1948).

[138] Ibid., letter to Witold von Hulewicz, p. 157.

> Weite Speicher der Kraft schafft sich der Zeitgeist, gestaltlos
> wie der spannende Drang, den er aus allem gewinnt.
> Tempel kennt er nicht mehr. Diese, des Herzens, Verschwendung
> sparen wir heimlicher ein. Ja, wo noch eins uebersteht,
> ein einst gebetetes Ding, ein gedientes, geknietes -,
> haelt es sich, so wie es ist, schon ins Unsichtbare hin.
> Viele gewahrens nicht mehr, doch ohne den Vorteil,
> dass sie's nun innerlich baun, mit Pfeilern und Statuen, groesser![139]

Difficult for a non-native speaker of German, this part requires a translation. A change in the format of the elegy also helps to make the verses more readable:

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[139]. Ibid., p. 72.

The Zeitgeist creates
huge silos of power
that are as shapeless
as the straining urge
he acquires from everything else.
He has forgotten the temples.
We are the ones
who try surreptitiously
to save such squanderings
of the heart.
Yes, where one still stands
a thing that once was
prayed to, knelt to,
served - it reaches
just as it is
into the unseen world.
Many don't notice
and miss the chance
to build it now
inside themselves
with pillars and statues
greater than ever![140]

The past is present in this poetry, but the images are subdued. The works of antiquity, whether silos of power, pillars or statues become, in Channing's phrase above, the architecture of the mind.

In Rilke's "Roman Fountain" there is a purity and simplicity of imagery which prefigures Mandelstam's Acmeism. One feels a permanence, an eternity in this poem, which describes in classical manner something which has survived.

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[140] Rainer Maria Rilke, Duino Elegies, trans. David Young (New York: W. W. Norton & Company Inc., 1978), p. 66.

The classical images which accompany the reader are ancient representations of the natural and the supernatural realms as discs, one of which floats above the other, and the more recent depiction, seen again in Baudelaire and Mandelstam, of dome as sky and columns as trees. Even the innocent reader perceives that this is more than a description of a fountain, as such images often occur in folklore:

> Two basins,
> one above the other suspended
> and both upheld
> over the ancient marble pool below,
> the water gently rising and falling,
> reaching the brim and gliding
> down to the waiting basin below
> that like an upheld mirror
> reflecting sky and clouds
> hiding behind dark evergreens
> objects indistinguishable,
> dreamlike continuing on its course,
> without regret,
> circle upon circle,
> till lazily reaching the moss-clad rim
> and surrendering to its final mirror,
> drop by drop,
> Causing the pool to smile darkly from below,
> rippling by its overflowing.[141]

Rome evokes in many newcomers a dualistic sense: a perception of transience confronted by an impression of eternity. Bergengruen attempts to explain:

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[141]. Rainer Maria Rilke, Selected Poems trans. A. E. Flemming (New York and Toronto: Methuen, 1986), p. 93.

> Was der Tod siegelte, das hat seine Gestalt gewonnen und seine Endgueltigkeit. Das die Leistung das Grab ueberdauert- vivit post funera virtus- das erfaehrt jeder Empfaengliche in Rom; und dass alles Vergaengliche nur ein Gleichnis ist, dies ebenfalls lernt sich nirgend gewisser als hier.[142]

If a truth is transitory, it is the semblance of truth. For truth to be truth, it must be eternal. Therefore to perceive the nature of truth one must search for it through an understanding of time.

Rome gives the poetic mind an awareness of time and at the same time provides a vehicle for the expression of this awareness. In our own century Osip Mandelstam (1891-1938) refers back to a long poetic and historical tradition in a lyrical treatment of the moment and of the past:

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[142]. Bergengruen, p. 75.

S veselym rzhaniem pastutsya tabuny,
I rimskoj rzhavchinoj okrasilas' dolina;
Sukhoe zoloto klassicheskoj vesny
Unosit vremeni prozrachnaya stremnina.

Topcha po oseni dubovye listy,
Chto gusto stelyutsya pustynnoyu tropinkoj,
Ya vspomniu Cesarya prekrasnye cherty -
Sej profil' zhenstvennyj s kovarnoyu gorbinkoj!

Zdes', Kapitoliya i Foruma vdali,
Sred' uvyadaniya spokojnogo prirody,
Ya slyshu Avgusta i na krayu zemli
Derzhavnym yablokom katyashchiesya gody.

Da budet v starosti pechal' moya svetla:
Ya v Rime rodilsya, i on ko mne vernulsya;
Mne osen' dobraya volchiceyu byla
I - mesyac cezarej - mne avgust ulybnulsya.[143]

[Herds of horses neigh happily in the meadows
and the valley has rusted as Rome did.
The transparent river bears away
dry gold: the spring days of the classics.

In autumn, in the wilderness, trampling
the oak leaves that have buried the paths,
I remember Caesar, the imperial features
like a woman's, from the side, with the nose
of one not to be trusted.
Capitol, Forum, are far away
from these colors draining peacefully out
of the season.
Even on the rim of the world I can hear the time
of Augustus rolling away, an orb, an apple.

When I'm old, may even my sadness shine.
In Rome I was born, and it comes back to me.
My she-wolf was kind autumn,
And August smiled on me - the month of the Caesars.][144]

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[143] Osip Mandel'shtam, Sobranie sochinenij v trekh tomakh, G. P. Struve and B. A. Filippova, eds., Vol. I (Washington: Inter-Language Literary Associates, 1967), poem 80, p. 49f.

[144] Osip Mandelstam, Selected Poems, trans. Clarence Brown and W. S. Merwin (New York: Atheneum, 1974), p. 9f.

The first stanza uses the ruins of Rome to present a picture of autumn. As in an impressionist painting, the city itself acquires colour from the pastoral setting for which it provides a simile. The image of Imperial Rome is an ever-present reality for Mandelstam; we see in the second and third stanzas that the image informs his poetic vision even when he is in the wilderness, or "on the rim of the world", a place to which Mandelstam would eventually be exiled and where he would die. The citizen of the world was born in Warsaw; the poetic voice was born in Rome. The most telling phrase of the poem, "it comes back to me", shows that the cultural and philosophical awareness which uses the ruins of Rome as topos for its concretization in verse is part of Mandelstam's everyday reality and part of his poetic persona.

Similar to Goethe in his treatment of nature and his blending of images from nature into the treatment of urban themes, Mandelstam remains a citizen of the cosmopolis. Sidney Monas writes:

> For all the pastoral topoi and metaphors of his usage, Mandelstam is pre-eminently an urban poet, a poet of the human polis, a political poet. He is as aware as any of the "Wasteland" aspect of the modern city.[145]

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[145] Sidney Monas, "An Introduction to Mandelstam" in Osip Emilevich Mandelstam, Complete Poetry of Osip Emilevich Mandelstam, trans. Burton Raffel and Alla Burago (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1973), p. 21.

Mandelstam's poem Rim, "Rome", shows his interest in the polis and also in the contemporary political reality which defines it. Yet the ruins are still present, forming the background of the thought:

Gde lyagushki fontanov, raskvakavshis'
I razbryzgavshis', boll'she ne spyat,
I, odnazhdy prosnuvshis', rasplakavshis'
Vo vsyu moch' svoikh glotok i rakovin,
Gorod, lyubyashchij sil'nym poddakivat',
Zemnovodnoj vodoyu kropyat.

Drevnost' letnyaya, legkaya, naglaya,
S khishchnym vzglyadom i ploskoj stupnej,-
Slovno most nenarushennyj Angela
V ploskostup'i nad zheltoj bodoj...

Goluboj, onelepennyj, pepel'nyj
V bezobraznom naroste domov,
Gorod, lastochkoj kupola leplennyj
Iz proylkov i iz skvoznyakov -
Prevratili v ubijstva pitomnik -
Vy, korichevoj krovi naemniki,
Italijckie chernorubashechniki,
Mertvykh cezarej zlye shchenki.[146]

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[146] Ibid., poem 381, "Rim", p. 259f.

[Where fountain-frogs croak
and splash until they cannot
sleep and, wide-awake, can only
weep with all their gullet-strength, their sea-shell strength, and

sprinkle the city with amphibious
water, city saying yes to the strong, oh yes.

Insolent antiquity, light, summer-blue,
flat-footed, with predatory
eyes - like an Angel's virgin
bridge flat-footed over yellow water...

Blue, absurd, ashen
in hideous excrescence of houses,
city sculpted by dome-swallows
out of alleys and winds-
now made a naursery of murder - and by
you, paid-up brown-bloods,
Italian blackshirts,
vicious little dogs of dead Caesars.][147]

In this masterpiece, images emerge of sycophant fountain frogs, either at Trevi or in the Piazza di Spagna; a feminized, wanton city with a prostitute's flat feet and predatory eyes; the Castel Sant' Angelo and its bridge, not virgin but repeatedly assaulted by troops and offering little resistance; a city "sculpted by dome-swallows/ out of alleys and winds"; the picture shows the heritage of Rome perverted or reduced to the absurd by the Fascists. Monas explains the meaning of the dome-swallows:

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[147]. Mandelstam in Ibid., p. 286f.

> Behind Petropolis [St. Petersburg, object of fascination for many poets, especially Blok and Mandelstam] are Greece and Rome. The dome of Saint Peter's, which is compared to a swallow's nest - and if we take the full elucidation of the myth of Procne the self-sacrificing, the giver-over of self, and Mandelstam's idea of the swallow as word-soul, we begin to see the meaning of this great "nest"...[148]

The violators of the city have become the object of the poet's attack. Those poets who rhapsodize about cities run the risk of seeing human actions as the various movements of a mass within the social order that is the cosmopolis, forgetting the nature of the individual.

In Futurism and Expressionism the final evolution of Poggio's and du Bellay's ghoulish imagery of the city comes about, showing the trope not to be an isolated instance of poetic virtuosity, but an expression of individual and collective anxiety which reaches a crescendo in the poetry, painting and cinema of the first two decades of this century. Vladimir Mayakovskij (1893-1930) said in 1914:

> The entire contemporary cultural world is being transformed into one huge gigantic city. The city is turning nature into an element. The city itself is becoming an element in whose womb the new urban man is being born [...] We know only the tunnels of streets, their traffic, noise, screeching, flashes, their endless commotion.[149]

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[148]. Monas, in Ibid., p. 24.

[149]. Vladimir Mayakovsky, quoted by Ryszard Przybylski in An Essay in the Poetry of Osip Mandelstam: God's Grateful Guest, trans. Madeline G. Levine (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1987), p. 16.

In the same year Mandelstam provides a counterpoint to Mayakovskij by showing the continuity between present and past, whereas Futurists were at pains to break the ties with history. Those who detect similarities between the thought of Mandelstam and that of Krasinski might remember that Mandelstam was born in Warsaw. It is the individual who provides the continuity in the following poem:

> Pust' imena tsvetushchikh gorodov
> Laskayut slukh znachitel'nostyu brennoj.
> Ne gorod Rim zhivet sredi vekov,
> A mesto cheloveka vo vselennoj.
>
> Im obladet' pytayutsya tsari,
> Svyashchenniki opravdyvayut vojny,
> I bez nego prezreniya dostojny,
> Kak zhalkij sor, doma i altari.[150]

> [Let all the flowering city-names
> stroke the ear with their tiny, brief importance.
> It's not Rome, as a city, that lasts forever,
> but man's place in the universe.
>
> Kings try to take it,
> priests use it as an argument for war,
> and without it houses, and altars,
> are contemptible rubble, pitiful, wretched.][151]

In this poem man is the individual whose place or rights kings try to take. Humanism is centred on a man-in-society who remains an individual from generation to generation.

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[150] Mandel'shtam, poem 66 in op. cit., p. 40.

[151] Mandelstam, in Complete Poetry of Osip Emilevich Mandelstam, p. 71.

Futurism, of Italian provenance, has sacrificed humanism on the altar of a new ideal which in the end is as old as fasci.

For Mandelstam, as for Goethe, nature is a part of the city and the city is a part of nature. The following poem is also from 1914:

> Priroda - tot zhe Rim i otrazilas' v nem.
> My vidim obrazy ego grazhdanskoj moshchi
> V prozrachnom vozdukhe, kak v tsirke golubom,
> Na forume polej i v kolonnade roshchi.
>
> Priroda - tot zhe Rim, i, kazhetsya, opyat'
> Nam nezachem bogov naprasno bespokoit':
> Est' vnutrennosti zhertv, chtob o vojne gadat',
> Raby, chtoby molchat', i kamin, chtoby stroit'![152]

> [Nature is Rome, too, is reflected, now, in Rome.
> We see its secular power
> in transparent air, like a light-blue circus,
> in the forum of fields, in the colonnade of groves.
>
> Nature is Rome, too, and again, well, why
> should we bother the gods, if we don't really have to?
> We have animals' smoking guts, to predict battles,
> we have slaves to preserve silence, and rocks to heap
> into buildings!][153]

As noted above, the imagery of these verses is ancient: the circus of light blue is the sky seen as a dome; the forum of fields is the earth; the colonnade of groves are the trees which hold up the sky. The same imagery has been used in architecture for millennia. Such a threefold physical unity captured the imagination of the Russian Acmeists and Constructivists. The first stanza sounds Acmeist and the second decidedly Constructivist. If the two poems above are read in their proper order the rhetorical nature of the Constructivist passage becomes clear, for the thought is undercut by the subsequent relativization of things material and by the importance given to human values.

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[152]. Mandel'shtam, poem 65 in op. cit., p. 40.

[153]. Mandelstam, in Complete Poetry of Osip Emilevich Mandelstam, p. 70.

It is to be expected that each poet will see Rome in his or her own way and that each reader will read Rome differently. Czesław Miłosz (1911-) sees Warsaw in Rome and compares the conflagration of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising in 1943 to the burning of Giordano Bruno (1548-1600), a temporary victory of the absolutists over those who believe that knowledge is infinite and final truth cannot be established. In "Campo di Fiori" the Polish Nobel laureate writes:

> Morał ktoś może wyczyta,
> Że lud warszawski czy rzymski
> Handluje, bawi się, kocha
> Mijając męczeńskie stosy.
> Inny ktoś morał wyczyta
> O rzeczy ludzkich mijaniu,
> O zapomnieniu, co rośnie,
> Nim jeszcze płomień przygasnął.[154]

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[154] Czesław Miłosz, "Campo di Fiori" in Poezje (Paryż: Instytut Literacki, 1981), 90f., p. 91.

[Perhaps one will guess the moral,
that the people of Warsaw and Rome
trade and play and love
passing by the martyrs' pyres.
Another, perhaps, will read
of the passing of human things,
of the oblivion growing
before the flame expired.][155]

The stanza above posits two interpretations of human events. One observer sees that life goes on in the face of tragedy; the carnival does not take heed of the carnage. Another regars existence as transient, life as fleeting, and memory as even more evanescent. Against these two thoughts the poetic voice utters the conviction of regeneration:

I ci ginący, samotni,
Już zapomniani od świata,
Język nasz stał się im obcy
Jak język dawnej planety.
Aż wszystko będzie legendą
I wtedy po wielu latach
Na nowym Campo di Fiori
Bunt wznieci słowo poety.[156]

[And those dying alone,
forgotten by the world,
their tongue grew strange to us,
like the tongue of an ancient planet.
And all will become a legend-
and then after many years
the poet's word shall stir revolt
on the new Campo di Fiori.][157]

Such is the position today of the Latin language. It is possible to arrive at a deeper understanding of these verses by looking at others in an attempt to recreate the poet's literary world. In his poem "Dwaj w Rzymie" (Two in Rome), Miłosz writes:

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[155]. Czesław Miłosz, "Campo di Fiori", trans. Adam Gillon, in Adam Gillon and Ludwik Krzyżanowski, eds. Introduction to Modern Polish Literature: An Anthology of Fiction and Poetry, 2nd. ed. (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1982, 447ff., p. 448.

[156]. Miłosz, "Campo di Fiori", op. cit., p. 91.

[157]. Miłosz, "Campo di Fiori", trans. Adam Gillon, op. cit., p. 449.

> Rozpoczyna się ciemność nad Zamkiem Swiętego Anioła
> W nieruchomym punkcie globu, gdzie Tybr czas rozplata.
> Dogasająca ziemia, wiatrem tknięta, oddycha w popiołach.
>
> Dosłyszalny jest szelest jaszczurki,
> Tupot myszy i płacz świata.[158]

> [Darkness begins over the Castel Sant' Angelo
> In a motionless spot on the globe, where the Tiber untwines time.
> The dying earth, touched by the wind, breathes midst the ashes.
>
> The rustle of a lizard is audible,
> The patter of a mouse and the world's crying.]

The motionless spot is of course Rome, the setting for an imaginary dialogue between a cardinal and the poet. One thinks immediately of Channing, who chose the same place for his conversations. Fiut observes of this poem that although the buildings are more lasting than changing civilizations, cultures and political systems, the Roman panorama gives little comfort, for the fate of individuals and the history of humanity are shown to be episodic and transient.[159]

Miłosz rarely speaks directly of ruins in his poetry.

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[158]. Miłosz, "Dwaj w Rzymie" in op. cit., 144-147, p. 144.

[159]. Aleksander Fiut, Moment wieczny: poezja Czesława Miłosza (Paris: Libella, 1987), p. 140.

While not as hermetic as Norwid, he writes for an ideal reader of high intellectual capacity and thorough knowledge of world literature as well as the national literature. He expects the readership to be familiar with most, if not all the works of Krasiński and Norwid seen above; this is the background against which he is writing. The centrality of Rome in Miłosz's thought becomes clear in "Cáfe Greco", a poem which Polish readers may recognize as a continuation of Polish culture in Rome. The Cáfe Greco was one of the favourite haunts of Mickiewicz, Słowacki, Norwid, and the Polish Legion. A fragment of the poem follows:

> Jaskółki Rzymu budzą mnie o świcie
> I czuję wtedy krótkotrwałość, lekkość
> Odrywania się. Kim jestem, kim byłem
> Nie tak już ważne.Dlatego, że inni
> Szlachetni, wielcy podtrzymują mnie
> Kiedy o nich pomyślę...
> [. . . . .]
> Czytany przez nas obu dawniej Maritain
> Miałby powód do chluby. A dla mnie: zdziwienie,
> Że stoi miasto Rzym, że znów się spotykamy,
> Że jestem jeszcze chwilę, i ja, i jaskółka.[160]

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[160]. Czesław Miłosz, "Cafe Greco" in *Kroniki* (Paryż: Instytut Literacki, 1987), p. 21f.

[The swallows of Rome wake me up at dawn
And I feel then transitoriness, the lightness
Of detaching myself. Who I am, who I was
Is not so important. Because others,
Noble-minded, great, sustain me
Anytime I think of them...
[. . . . .]
Maritain whom we used to read long ago
Would have reason to be glad. And for me: amazement
That the city of Rome stands, that we meet again,
That I still exist for a moment, myself and the
swallows.][161]

The reference to Maritain probably concerns Jacques Maritain (1882-1973), French philosopher and author of Art and Scholasticism as well as True Humanism. Many philosophers feel at home in Rome, as do the writers of many nations and many historical periods. Yet regardless of the importance of Rome for Miłosz, his attitude toward the greatness of both city and empire is highly critical. In "Epitafium" (1986) he turns du Bellay's third sonnet of the Antiquitez into a rhetorical question, thus carrying on a polemic which started in the Renaissance and, for Polish literature, reached a high point in the time of Romanticism. The empire in this poem is the successor of the one in Krasiński's Irydion:

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[161] Czesław Miłosz, "Café Greco" in The Collected Poems: 1931-1987 (London: Viking Penguin Inc., 1988), p. 456f.

W Rzymie, czy naprawdę warto szukać Rzymu?
Imperia upadają i chwała im za to.
Giną razem z przepychem marmurów ozdobnych
I laurem nad czołami okrutnych cezarów.
Wielbiła siebie samą niesyta wilczyca,
Swoje przeglądy wojska, święta i parady,
I słusznie, że jest popiół...[162]

[Is it really worthwhile, to look for Rome in Rome?
Empires fall; good riddance.
They perish along with the splendour of decorative marbles
And along with the laurels on the foreheads of cruel caesars.
The unsated she-wolf worshipped herself,
Her military inspections, holidays and parades,
And it is right and just that there are ashes...]

These verses continue a Polish literary tradition, already evident in Krasiński's Irydion, in which the critical attitude of the work stems from the use of Rome to symbolize the oppressors of Poland, and its fate to represent their predicted destiny. In the historical vision of Miłosz there are many such Romes, but in this instance the "unsated she-wolf" is Moscow, or more specifically the Soviet system, and the poem, in light of recent events, is prophetic.

Perhaps it is fitting that the last word of this study be given to a philosopher who found a home in Rome, for his thoughts about life are also valid for literature.

What George Santayana (1863-1952) says of travellers also applies to writers and readers, inasmuch as any literary work is a journey of the mind:

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[162] Miłosz, "Epitafium" in Kroniki, p. 24.

> The traveller must be somebody and come from somewhere, so that his definite character and moral traditions may supply an organ and a point of comparison for his observations.[163]

After a lifetime of physical and metaphysical wandering Santayana decided to make a home in Rome. He explains his reasons:

> And the predestined socket in my case was Rome: *omnium urbis es orbis ecclesiarum*, says the inscription at the Lateran, *mater et caput*. Mother and head of my moral world, surely, and central enough even today: balmy also, humanly habitable at all seasons, full of ancient and modern and even recent beauties, and inhabited by a people that more than any other resembles the civilized ancients. I could not be more at home anywhere, while preserving my essential character of stranger and traveller, with the philosophic freedom that this implies. Thus I renounce travel here, where I may still continually travel in thought to all ages and countries and enjoy the divine privilege of ubiquity without moving from my fated centre of gravity and equilibrium.[164]

Two hundred yea[illegible] ago, Goethe wrote something deceptively simple:

> Wer den Dichter will verstehen
> Muss in Dichters Lande gehen.[165]

The poems referred to in this study make clear that in order to know Rome one can read history or go there if one wishes; the literary work, however, tells as much about the Dichter and the Dichters Lande and the Zeitgeist as it does about Rome.

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[163] George Santayana, *Persons and Places: My Host the World* Vol. 3 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953, 1945), p. 35.

[164] Ibid., p. 56.

[165] Goethe, from memory.

Santayana chose Rome as a home in the same way that poets choose Rome as a setting for creative activity. He writes of his final years, spent in Italy:

> When at the threshold of old age I found myself free and looked about for a place of retirement and finally found it in Italy and particularly in Rome, I was not at all in search of an ideal society or even of a congenial one. I was looking only for suitable lodgings, where the climate, the scene, and the human ways of my neighbours might not impede but if possible inspire me in my projected work and where I might bring my life to a peaceful end.[166]

The philosopher seems at pains to defend or explain his decision to live and work in Rome:

> It might seem that I turned to Italy and especially to Rome as a last resort, but that was not the case. Italy and Rome were my first choice, my ideal point of vantage in thought, the one anthropological centre, where nature and art were most beautiful, and mankind least distorted from their complete character.[167]

Santayana opposes the constant human striving for new things or for more things by describing his own form of aesthetic minimalism in which traces of Acmeism can be discerned:

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[166]. Santayana, p. 119.

[167]. Ibid., p. 123.

> ...I soon retreated into my aesthetic, or rather my poetic, shell, and limited my diet of visual impressions to a few chosen sights. The central streets came in inevitably for a person who lives in them and frequents cafes; but my usual walk was to Trinita de' Monti, the Pincio and the Villa Borghese. On some days I would go instead to the Tiber, St. Peter's, and (when it was made) the admirable garden at Castel Sant'Angelo; or else at the Janiculum, San Pietro in Montorio and, above all, the Aqua Paola, where I always read the monumental inscription over the fountain, until finally I knew it by heart. And if any friends turned up, I would explain my aversion to museums and picture galleries, but would offer to take them, after luncheon, to see three things, the Pantheon, Michelangelo's Moses, and the Forum from the top of the Capitoline, which included admiring the two pavilions of Michelangelo and the statue of Marcus Aurelius. Of these things I never tired; but of seeing more things or other things I had had enough. Fresher thoughts came and I could transmit more pleasure in recognising these old objects than in staring at new ones.[168]

Few have articulated as well as Santayana the significance for a sentient individual of the relationship between the person and the city:

> In Rome, in the eternal city, I feel nearer to my own past, and to the whole past and future of the world, than I should in any cemetery or in any museum of relics. Old places and old persons in their turn, when spirit dwells in them, have an intrinsic vitality of which youth is incapable; precisely the balance and wisdom that comes from long perspectives and broad foundations [...]; and thus mind is reconciled to its own momentary existence and limited vision by the sense of the infinite supplements that embosom it on every side.[169]

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[168] Ibid., p. 128f.

[169] Ibid., p. 131f.

If one can accept that the Rome which was once seen to be the centre of all things is now in ruin, it then becomes easier to accept that the individual is no more the centre of his or her personal world than was Rome, that "no one point, no one phase of spirit is materially a public centre for all the rest."[170]

No study on the ruins of Rome in literature could be complete without viewing the development of the topos in Italian literature, in the Spanish sonnets of Quevedo, in contributions from the literary society of Renaissance Ragusa, in the essays of Montaigne (1533-1592), in the French Classicists, in Chateaubriand (1768-1848), Stendhal (1783-1842), Anatole France (1844-1924) and in the Russian poetry of Tiutchev (1803-1873) and the lesser-known Apollon N. Majkov (1821-1897); it would be especially refreshing to have views from non-European sources. Within the narrow scope of this study, however, it has been the intention to demonstrate that the literary world of the Slavic languages has not been sufficiently taken into consideration in the Western vision of literary history. To pursue the topic further would possibly result in a loss of focus. Bearing this in mind, it is preferable to leave the poetry of the above authors for other studies which would specifically follow the development of the topos within one national or linguistic tradition than to overburden the reader with works which might not add substance to the main argument, whatever their individual merit. The works and names of many poets omitted here will live on long after this small contribution has been made. While works by Slavic authors have been chosen according to the criteria of literary merit and volume of production, the omission of other works does not testify to their lack of literary merit but rather, in the case of Taras Shevchenko (1814-1861) as a prime example, to the unfamiliarity of the present author with Ukrainian, the language of the poet. While this does not represent an insurmountable barrier, study of such works must be left for another time and another place.

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[170] Ibid., p. 132.

CONCLUSION

While it may be more within the Hellenic spirit than in the Roman to seek harmony where on reflection one perceives the seemingly opposite phenomena of perdurance and transience, creation and destruction, beauty and ugliness, power of state and power of organized religion, nationalism and internationalism, fame and oblivion, the principal intellectual and philosophical function of the literary works seen above does not appear to be the presentation of paradoxes, but rather the resolution and reconciliation of those opposites which the *topos* evokes in order to arrive at an understanding of the place of humankind in the world. Beyond the universal concerns, each writer uses the ruins of Rome to evoke something different, usually according to national interests, but within a wider historical and literary period. If translations must be made taking into account the two variables of language and literary-historical period, then to situate the poetry and prose within a more healthy perspective would require a three-dimensional rendering in which the x-axis would represent the structural elements both of language and of genre, the y-axis would stand for the *Zeitgeist* and the socio-historical forces at work, and the z-axis would show the originality, the style and the virtuosity of the individual writer as a carrier of culture and of ideas.

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